Washtenaw
Jewish News

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Celebrate Israel Take 3—Focus on Jewish music and art

Ellisha Caplan, special to the WJN

On Sunday, April 29, the Washtenaw County Jewish community will gather at the Eastern Michigan University Student Center to celebrate the 59th anniversary of the State of Israel at Celebrate Israel 3. This year's celebration, which runs from 3 to 6 p.m., marks the third collaborative effort of nearly 20 Ann Arbor Jewish organizations under the leadership of the Jewish Federation of Washtenaw County. Co-chaired by Marc Bernstein and Shirit Kamil, the planning committee is comprised of representatives from the Ann Arbor Orthodox Minyan, Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Havurah, Beth Israel Congregation, Jewish Cultural Society, Hadassah, Jewish Community Center, Jewish Family Services, Keshet Ann Arbor, Temple Beth Emeth, Young Judaea, Habonim Dror, EMU Hillel, U-M Hillel, the Israeli Community of Ann Arbor, Chabad of Ann Arbor and the Hebrew Day School.

This year's theme for Celebrate Israel is "Kikar Safra: A Celebration of Jewish Music and Art in Honor of Israel Independence Day." Neil Alexander and his "Klezmer Fusion Band" will play klezmer, Israeli folk and rock music, and other local community groups will also perform, including Temple Beth Emeth's Shir Hadash high school band and Kol HaLev choir. Celebration-goers will have the chance to try Israeli karaoke and Israeli dancing (with instruction).

Andrew Rudick, Mira Sussman and Evan Zacks, 2006 Celebrate Israel

Wonderful Jewish art, from photography of Israelis by Paul Goldman (1943-1961) to paintings by Ruth Weisberg on display in the EMU Student Center Art Gallery, and more, will be on display in the building. Children will have the opportunity to participate in a special hands-on art project with glass artists Dani Katsir and Gail Kaplan, who will work with the youngsters to create a mosaic to commemorate Celebrate Israel 3.

In a change from past years, the 2007 event is at the brand new EMU Student Center. "The space is going to be great, especially since the weather tends to be iffy in April," says Shirit Kamil, event co-chair. The venue will also allow the entire program to take place in one large area.

Of course, no festival would be complete without food. U-M Hillel's new kosher chef, Emil Boch, will prepare Israel-inspired food that will be available throughout the festival. ■

EMU Student Center is located at 900 Oakwood Street, approximately five miles east of Ann Arbor. To get to the Student Center, travel east on Washtenaw or Packard (which becomes Cross). Turn left onto Oakwood. Take Oakwood past the first stop sign, past the large parking structure and turn right into Student Center guest parking lot. Register online for this event by visiting jewishannarobr.org/ci07.

Library offers films and book event for Holocaust Remembrance

Emily Eisbruch, staff writer

The Ann Arbor District Library will feature three events during April in honor of Holocaust Remembrance Day. The documentary *The Hidden Child*, the story of Maud Dahme, a six-year old girl in the Netherlands at the time of the Holocaust, will be shown on April 9. On April 16, the Library will present the film *Playing for Time*, with an award-winning script by Arthur Miller. Finally, on April 20, editor Berl Falbaum will discuss his book *Shanghai Remembered...Stories of Jews Who Escaped to Shanghai from Nazi Germany*. According to Tim Grimes, community relations manager at the AADL, "These are all very different and very interesting events, each of which was suggested by our community partners."

From ***The Hidden Child***

The Hidden Child

On Monday, April 9 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. the Downtown Library will present a free screening of the award-winning 2006 documentary, *The Hidden Child*. This extraordinary film is the story of Maud Dahme, a six-year-old Dutch girl who survived the Holocaust because of the decency and bravery of complete strangers. Dahme's own story is one of courage and hope in the face of evil and death, and the film imparts important lessons about courage, struggle, survival and tolerance. This one-hour, unrated film is co-sponsored by Michigan Television. The film will be followed by a discussion led by Jennifer White, station manager for Michigan Television.

Of the 1.6 million Jewish children who lived in Europe before World War II, only 100,000 survived the Holocaust. Most were hidden children, shut away in attics, cellars, convents or in villages or farms. Dahme was one of the estimated 3,000 to 8,000 Jewish children in the Netherlands who were hidden and saved from Nazi death camps by Christians who felt a moral obligation to do the right thing, even at the risk of their own lives.

Dahme recalls dodging bullets and being forced to lie in order to survive, as well as the compassion of the strangers who risked their own lives to save Jewish children. Unlike Anne Frank, who hid with her family in Amsterdam, Dahme was separated from her parents. She and her younger sister Rita were

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JCC holds Film Festival opening night sponsor gala

Rachel Rosenthal, special to the WJN

The Jewish Community Center of Washtenaw County will host a gala reception for sponsors of the Lenore Marwil Jewish Film Festival on Sunday, May 6 at 6:30 p.m. at the Michigan Theater. Participants will enjoy a delicious cocktail buffet prepared by local caterer Lori Shepard of Simply Scrumptious. This event marks the beginning of four days of Jewish films from around the world.

The contributions of Film Festival sponsors make it possible for the JCC to bring the event to Ann Arbor. Sponsor categories begin at $360 for a Movie Lover; $500 – Screenwriter; $1,000 – Casting Director; $2,000 – Director, $5,000 – Producer; and $10,000 – Mogul. Sponsors receive invitations to the reception as well as passes for the entire festival. The opening night gala will honor all sponsors, especially the Charles and Rita Gelman Educational Foundation and Michael and Patricia Levine, our Producers.

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For more on the JCC Film Festival, see pages 6 – 8

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Deir Yassin remembered – in full

By WJN staff writers

In Palestine "every acre of land acquired by the Jews has been bought at a price fixed by buyer and seller," noted Albert Einstein in an outraged letter to the *Manchester Guardian* (October 12, 1929). Two months earlier, Arabs in Palestine had rioted for a week, massacring Jews in Jerusalem, Safed and Hebron, where the ancient Jewish community was forced out. Britain's response was to close the country to Jews. This, argued Einstein, was punishing the victim.

Palestinian leader offers his services to Hitler. Berlin 1942.

"Does public opinion in Great Britain realize that the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem… is the centre of all the trouble?" Einstein demanded, pointing to the Mufti's incitement of the violence. "Is it tolerable that… so utterly irresponsible and unscrupulous a politician should be enabled to continue to exercise his evil influence…?"

In 1929, even Einstein could not foresee the evil that would be stirred by Amin al-Husseini, Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, leader of the Palestinian national movement and future Nazi SS officer (he was given the rank SS Ubergruppenfuehrer by Heinrich Himmler). Hitler earmarked him to be "Fuehrer of the Arabs" upon the Third Reich's victory, which the Mufti worked assiduously to ensure. He discussed their mutual Jewish problem with Hitler's envoy Adolph Eichmann in summer of 1937 and fled from the British that October. He escaped with his entourage, landing in Iraq where he instigated a pro-Nazi coup. British forces defeated it (Churchill vowed the British now owed nothing to Palestinian nationalists after the war). The Palestinians fled Iraq to Berlin, where the Mufti spent the war recruiting Muslim divisions to fight for Hitler.

The Mufti's legacy will be brought to mind in April when the Deir Yassin Remembered organization brings to Michigan a campaign to publicize a massacre of Arab civilians in the village of Deir Yassin by Jewish forces battling to break the Mufti's starvation siege of Jerusalem. The attack on and massacre at Deir Yassin occurred during the civil war period of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War (from December 1947 to mid-May 1948).

On November 29, 1947, the UN debated the future of the former British mandate territory of Palestine, the vaguely defined territory of the Ottoman Empire defeated in WWI which was bitterly contested between Jewish and Arab national movements. After much study, the UN commission determined that dividing the land was the best solution. Months earlier the UN had similarly recommended creating a new state for Muslims—Pakistan—by dividing the Indian subcontinent. However, during the UN debate representatives of Arab countries and of the Palestinian leadership vowed to thwart Jewish independence, even if it were limited to areas of Jewish majority, the acres "bought and paid for" with money raised from small donations throughout the world (Einstein's first trip to the United States was as a Zionist fundraiser). A number of Arab UN delegates (Egyptian, Iraqi and Palestinian) even threaten revenge violence against the indigenous Jewish communities throughout the Middle East and North Africa if the resolution passed.

On November 30, 1947 the United Nations did pass U.N. Resolution 181, calling for the internationalization of Jerusalem and partition of the British Mandate of Palestine into two states, Arab and Jewish. Widespread disagreements over partition, tensions, and intermittent fighting between Jews and Arabs boiled as British rule deteriorated, culminating into widespread riots and low intensity warfare. Palestinian Arabs took responsibility for initiating the violence. "The representative of the Jewish Agency told us yesterday that they were not the attackers, that the Arabs had begun the fighting, Jamal Husseini, representing Palestinian leadership, told the security council. "We did not deny this. We told the whole world that we were going to fight." According to French journalist-historians Collins and LaPierre (*O Jerusalem*) the violence was initiated by a phone call from the Mufti.

After WW II, the Yugoslavian government charged Mufti al-Husseini with genocidal war crimes for his role in the destruction of Balkan Serbs, Gypsys and Jews. But the Mufti escaped custody in France (apparently after promising the French help in undermining Algerian calls for independence). He made his way back to the Middle East and resumed Palestinian leadership.

During the months following the U.N. Resolution, Haganah reprisals were first confined to specific attackers; then, by February 1948, more general reprisals. Irgun and Lehi (also known as the Stern Gang) acting independently, reverted to terror tactics of bombing Arab markets and bus stops. Palestinian Arabs retaliated with terror bombings of their own, planned by the Mufti's Nazi-trained explosives expert Fawzi el-Qutb (who finished out his career consulting Yasir Arafat).

A particularly gruesome attack took place December 30, 1947. Arab workers at Haifa Oil Refinery spontaneously turned on their Jewish coworkers with hammers, chisels, and clubs, killing 39, and wounding 50, before British forces intervened. The Arabs workers had been incensed on learning that

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Extra copies of the *Washtenaw Jewish News* are available at locations throughout Washtenaw County.

Chaverim B'Shirim celebrates the life and work of Irving Berlin

Marilyn Krimm, special to the WJN

Chaverim B'Shirim will present songs by Irving Berlin on Sunday, April 22 at 2 p.m. at the Jewish Community Center of Washtenaw County. Chaverim B'Shirim is a JCC-based choir that performs music by Jewish composers from the 1600s to the present day.

Irving Berlin was one the most famous and important songwriters of the 20th century. To quote Jerome Kern, "Irving Berlin has no place in American Music, He IS American Music."

Irving Berlin was born in Tyumen, Russia, on May 11, 1888. His name was Israel Isadore Baline. The family came to the United States to escape the persecution of Jews, and arrived in New York in 1891. His father, Moses, was a cantor and *shoichet* (ritual slaughterer), not an uncommon mix of occupations since the small villages could not support a family. Irving was the youngest of eight children. They all had to help with earning money. One of his first jobs was as a singing waiter. The boss asked him to write an original song for the cafe since a rival establishment had a signature song published. The result was "Marie From Sunny Italy," in 1907. When it was published it earned him 37 cents. He had written both the words and music. The cover stated "I.Berlin" as the composer. This gave him a new career and a new name. His career in "Tin Pan Alley" was launched in 1911 with "Alexander's Ragtime Band."

In 1917 Berlin joined the army and staged a musical revue—a tribute to the Armed Forces called *Yip, Yip, Yaphank*. It contained 350 members of the army. The musical earned enough to build a Service Center at Camp Upton. "God Bless America" was written for the show. In 1938 it was revised and was introduced to the nation by Kate Smith on her radio program. It remains one of his most popular songs. He assigned the royalties to the "God Bless America Foundation" which supports the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

During World War II, Berlin wrote the musical *This Is The Army*, which raised $10 million for Army Emergency Relief. Opening in 1942, it played for one year on Broadway and then went on tour with a cast of 300 servicemen. Two of the hits were "This is the Army, Mr. Jones" and "I Left My Heart at the Stagedoor Canteen."

The "Irving Berlin Music Company" was established so that Berlin would not have to share the profits from his songs with another production company. Berlin published over 3,000 songs in his lifetime.

After WWI Berlin built a theater, "The Music Box," so that he could introduce his songs to the public at his discretion. The first show was *The Music Box Revue of 1921*. These were shows without a story line. Every year he had a new revue with his new material. The theater is still in business.

Another outlet for his music was Hollywood movies. Al Jolson introduced music to film with *The Jazz Singer*, in 1927. Jolson sang "Mammy" and also "Blue Skies" that Berlin had written. The film *Top Hat* in 1935, with Astaire and Rodgers was a wild success. He and Astaire each cleared over $300,000 dollars.

Holiday Inn was the vehicle for "White Christmas," the most successful song of the century. Berlin received an Oscar for "White Christmas" in 1942. The Broadway Shows, *Call Me Madam* and *Annie Get Your Gun* were his best of Broadway and proved popular when transformed to film.

Berlin supported many Jewish charities and causes. He was honored by the Young Men's Hebrew Association as an outstanding American of the Jewish Faith. President Eisenhower presented him with a gold medal in 1955, for having composed so many patriotic songs. ■

Chaverim B'Shirim will present excerpts from Call Me Madam *and* Annie get Your Gun *in their show on April 22, at 2 p.m. at the JCC. Refreshments will be served. A $5 donation is*

Federation observes Yom HaShoah with UMS event

Ellisha Caplan, special to the WJN

The Jerusalem String Quartet.

On Sunday, April 15, the Jewish Federation will honor Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) in conjunction with the University Musical Society at a concert featuring The Jerusalem String Quartet.

At 3 p.m. the community is invited to participate in a ceremony honoring the memory of those who perished in the Holocaust at the Holocaust Memorial Sculpture in Raoul Wallenberg Square or, in the case of rain, at University of Michigan Alumni Center's Founder's Room. The concert, which will include Samuel Barber's famous "Adagio" for strings, begins at 4 p.m. in Rackham Auditorium.

The Jerusalem Quartet is comprised of four young musicians who began playing together in 1993 when they were still in their mid-teens. With more than a decade as an ensemble, they have matured into outstanding interpreters of the string quartet literature. They display a liveliness and spontaneity that has brought international acclaim, and their 2005 UMS debut led to immediate requests for a return appearance. "Musical electricity may be unfathomable, but one thing is for sure—they have it." (*The Strad*) ■

For more information about the program, and to purchase specially priced tickets ($30.60), visit www.jewishannarbor.org/jerusalem-stringquartet. Questions about the program can be directed to Ellisha Caplan, 677-0100, or ellisha@jewishannarbor.org.

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DVD release of TBE adult choir's Eastern European concert tour

Debbie Merion, special to the WJN

A film of Temple Beth Emeth's adult choir's groundbreaking 2004 concert tour of Romania, Bulgaria and Greece is now available in an extended DVD version. The DVD includes a conversation with filmmakers Steve Haskin and Debbie Merion. Previously unseen footage of the trip is shown as they chat.

The film, called *Kol Halev in Concert: Eastern European Tour*, can be obtained in the TBE gift shop or office for $18. Kol Halev, which means "voice of the heart" in Hebrew, is TBE's adult choir led by Cantor Annie Rose.

On the DVD, the choir sings songs like "Tumbalalaika" and "Hine Mah Tov" in memorable settings that include a magnificent restored Sephardic temple in Romania and a humble Jewish Community Center in Bulgaria. An onstage camera captures the poignancy and exuberance of the faces in the audience.

One memorable highlight of the film shows an elderly gentleman standing up in the 600 member audience of the Bucharest Choral Temple to sing an impromptu solo version of "Oyfn Pripetshik" after the Yiddish lullaby is announced.

The Eastern European Tour film has been shown at TBE, Glacier Hills, the Michigan Theater, and the Lenore Marwil Jewish Film Festival in Ann Arbor. David Magidson, director of the Lenore Marwil Jewish Film Festival, said, "I thought it was filled with spirit, warmth and good feeling... Its greatest strength is the feeling of attachment to the Jews of Eastern Europe and to those who perished…. It is a splendid document conceived in joy and music rather than weeping and instruction. How can you not like it?"

The film is being released now to fundraise and raise awareness of TBE's next film about Kol Halev's upcoming 2007 summer concert tour of Argentina. Funds raised by the Eastern European Tour film are earmarked directly to the TBE Film Fund to support the Argentina film. The Argentina film plan calls for upgraded sound and camera equipment and editorial assistance to produce a film for local and national distribution through community showings, DVD distribution, television broadcast, film festivals, and the Jewish educational community. An HD-quality film, even with in-kind contributions of travel costs and filmmakers' time, can cost $50,000 to $100,000.

A start-up grant of $5,000 has been awarded by the Jewish Federation of Washtenaw County to help support the Argentina film. For more information on purchasing the Kol Halev Eastern European film, call TBE at 665-4744 or visit www.KolHalevFilms. ■

Director Jessica Brater back on home ground

WJN staff writers

Jessica Brater, left, working with members of Polybe + Seats on The Charlotte Salomon Project.

It's great to be back in Ann Arbor," says artistic director Jessica Brater, whose cutting-edge New York theater company, Polybe + Seats, performs at the University of Michigan's new Walgreen Drama Center April 6 and 7 as part of the celebration marking the opening of the Arthur Miller Theatre. "This is my home town and this is where my interest in theater began."

Even before landing lead roles in student productions at Burns Park Elementary School, Tappan Middle School, and Pioneer High in a repertory that spanned the gamut from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* to Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit*, Brater was always busy organizing amateur theatricals with her childhood friend, Rachel Dengiz, now a documentary film maker. Brater recalls, "We used our siblings as not always enthusiastic stage props, but fortunately they have forgiven us." She spent many childhood summers in England, where her father, U-M Theater Professor Enoch Brater, served as director of the London Program. "I was fanatical about *Cats* from age five to eight, but thankfully my parents also took me to see Shakespeare." She stills remembers a production of *The Comedy of Errors* performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company in which the actors had blue faces.

But it was at Barnard College in New York, from which she graduated magna cum laude in 2000 and where she was awarded the Kenneth Janes Prize in Theater, that Brater's focus on directing took shape. She was especially attuned to the difficult challenge of working on the plays of Gertrude Stein. She was intrigued by the possibility of finding stage solutions that would convey Stein's richly imaginative theatrical vision. Brater's commitment to this major modernist has never waned. The name of her company, Polybe + Seats, is in fact a homage to Stein's dog. "Seats," she says, "are where you sit." Shawn-Marie Garrett, a contributing editor to *Theater Magazine*, calls Brater's troupe "the coolest new ensemble company in town."

Brater has piled up an impressive number of directing credits. In New York her work has been showcased at the HERE Arts Center, the Tank Theater, the Flea Theater, the American Theater of Actors, the Present Company Theatorium, the Makor Center, and the Paradise Theater, as well as in other venues in the burgeoning artistic community of trendy Brooklyn. Her directing credits also include plays mounted for the Brown University Festival of New Plays and at the Gertrude Stein Symposium held at Columbia University in 2004. Her work has also been featured abroad, at theater festivals in Israel and in Italy.

These days her major commitment rests with Polybe + Seats, an avant-garde company that produces plays and projects experimenting with language and structure toward "the development of a new poetics for the theater." Inspired by Stein's writing for and about theater, Polybe has been highly praised by the *Village Voice* as "a promising young company bravely taking on the impossible Stein challenge."

The company kicked off 2007 by premiering a week of new plays by Suzan-Lori Parks in the 365 Days/365 Plays project at the New York Public Theater. Later this year Polybe will begin work on a newly devised piece and will also produce a number of Stein's children's plays, working with kids from the local community surrounding Brooklyn's Greenpoint Reform Church.

In Ann Arbor the group will present *The Charlotte Salomon Project,* which premiered at Brooklyn Fire Proof in November 2006 and was developed as part of a residency at Mabou Mines and a New Play Commission from the National Foundation for Jewish Culture. The texts, visuals and actions of the play are drawn from the collection of over 1,300 paintings created by Charlotte Salomon during World War II and printed by the young artist in a volume called *Life? Or Theater?* The paintings illustrate her complex family history and her relationships with her mother, father, stepmother and an operatic voice teacher who became her obsession. Salomon was murdered by the Nazis in a concentration camp, but her book miraculously survived. Polybe has transformed her text into a vibrant performance piece that has been hailed by *nytheater.com* as "a bubbling mixture of fine art, theatre, role-playing, and installation, making this less a play than an experience."

The performance of *The Charlotte Salomon Project* offers Ann Arbor audiences the rare opportunity to witness a dramatic narrative that parallels the story told in *Playing for Time,* the adaptation Arthur Miller based on Fania Fenelon's *The Musicians of Auschwitz,* in a far more realistic style. (Theatregoers may note that Arthur Miller's *Playing for Time* is the inaugural drama at the new Arthur Miller Theatre in late March and early April.) Both *Playing for Time* and *The Charlotte Salomon Project* detail the experience of Jewish women artists whose lives are abruptly interrupted by the horror of the Shoah.

"Jessica Brater's direction and Miriam Felton-Dansky's dramaturgy are perhaps the real stars of the show," one New York reviewer noted. "The acting, the paintings, the curating of the paintings and the tableaus, when seen as shining components of a glittering whole, are ultimately what gives this play the status of a theatrical staging that defies definition. The level of planning and thought that is obvious when you are living this piece (there is no better verb) is exceptionally impressive."

In addition to her role as artistic director of Polybe + Seats, Brater is busy working on completing her Ph.D. in Theater Studies at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. For the past three years she has served as key administrator for the Barnard-Columbia Theatre Department, where she has also taught courses and given workshops in her discipline.

"Bringing my work to Ann Arbor in a state-of-the-art facility like the Walgreen Drama Center is something I never could have imagined when I was playing with costumes and makeup on Wells Street and Lincoln Avenue in Burns Park. It's a very special way to be welcomed home," says Brater. ■

The Charlotte Salomon Project will be performed at the new Walgreen Drama Center on Friday, April 6 at 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. and on Saturday, April 7 at 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. Tickets are free of charge but should be reserved in advance to ensure a seat. For more information or to reserve tickets call the Michigan League Box Office at 764-2538. To learn more about Polybe + Seats or to support the company, visit www.polybeandseats.org.

New book explores Dialogue between past, present

Emily Eisbruch, special to the WJN

On Wednesday, April 11 from 4–6 p.m., Shaman Drum Bookshop will host a reception and signing for Henry Greenspan's *Reflections: Auschwitz, Memory, And a Life Recreated*. Greenspan, a University of Michigan psychology professor and a playwright, wrote the book based on his 25-year conversation with Agi Rubin, a Farmington Hills resident who survived Auschwitz and other concentration camps. Both Henry Greenspan and Agi Rubin will speak briefly during the event to provide insight into their collaboration and the book itself.

Reflections describes the fate of Holocaust memories over the course of an entire life. Greenspan, who also authored *Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Recounting and Life History* (1998), explains, "my approach has been to interview survivors as often as seemed useful to both of us. There are other survivors, too, with whom I've spoken many, many times, but Agi has been my primary teacher about what it means to live through and after the destruction."

"New experiences reflect old ones," Rubin notes. "They put them in a different light, or a different darkness." These reflections, the continuing dialogue between past and present, are the story this book tells about Auschwitz, memory, and a life recreated.

Shaman Drum Bookshop is located at 315 South State Street. For more information, call 662-7407.

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Haydn	Quartet in f minor, Op. 20, No. 5 (1772)
Barber	Quartet for Strings, Op. 11 (1936)
Tchaikovsky	Quartet No. 1 in D Major, Op. 11 ("Accordian") (1865)

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JCC Lenore Marwil Jewish Film Festival returns to Michigan Theater

Rachel Rosenthal, special to the WJN

The Jewish Community Center of Washtenaw County, in association with the Jewish Community Center of Metropolitan Detroit and the Michigan Theater, will bring the Lenore Marwil Jewish Film Festival to Ann Arbor for its sixth year. The festival will showcase 19 films over five days at the Michigan Theater on East Liberty from Sunday, May 6 through Thursday, May 10.

Festival highlights include the opening night film, *Steel Toes,* starring Oscar nominee David Straithairn (*Good Night and Good Luck, Lost in Yonkers, A League of Their Own*), and full schedule is listed on the JCC web site at www.jccannarbor.org.

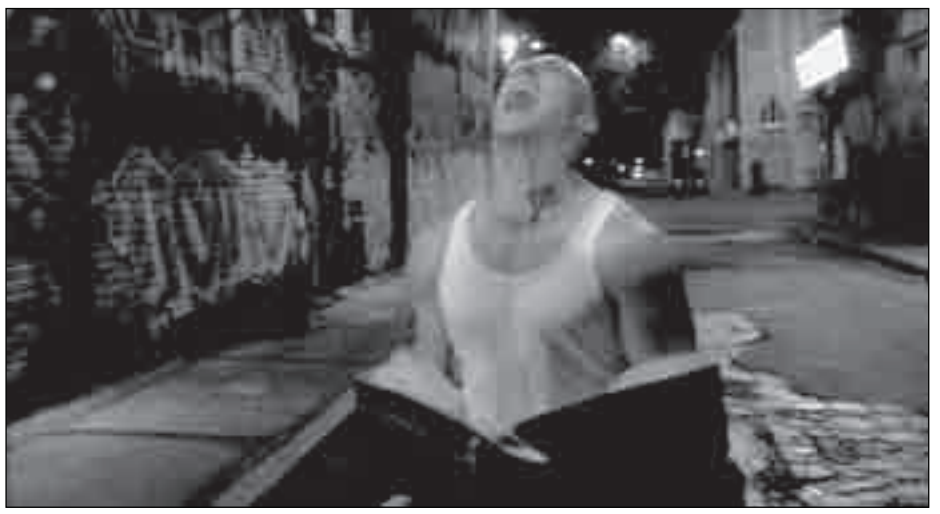
Tickets to each film are $10; a festival pass, good for all 19 Ann Arbor films, is available for $65. Tax deductible sponsorship opportunities are also available. For more information, call the JCC at 971-0990.

Sunday, May 6, 2007

10 a.m. – Special student screening of Stolen Summer

2002, 91 minutes, English, Color, USA

The Jewish Film Festival will hold a free screening of *Stolen Summer* for middle school and high school students and families. This film and writer/director Pete Jones were the subjects of the first season of the Matt Damon/Ben Affleck-produced HBO reality TV series *Project Greenlight*. Millions saw the HBO series; now viewers can see the full-length final cut.



A scene from Steel Toes

The film is about Pete, an eight-year-old Catholic boy growing up in the suburbs of Chicago in the mid-1970s. Pete attends Catholic school, where as classes let out for the summer, he's admonished by a nun to follow the path of Lord, and not that of the devil. Perhaps taking this message a bit too seriously, Pete decides his goal for the summer is to help someone get into heaven. Having been told that Catholicism is the only sure path to the kingdom of the Lord, Pete decides to convert a Jew to Catholicism in order to improve their standing in the afterlife.

Hoping to find a likely candidate, Pete begins visiting a nearby synagogue, where he gets to know Rabbi Jacobson, who responds to Pete's barrage of questions with good humor. Pete also makes friends with the Rabbi's son, Danny, who is about the same age; when he learns that Danny is seriously ill, he decides Danny would be an excellent choice for conversion.

This is a deeply spiritual film with a lovely story to match its interfaith message of friendship and faith. The friendship between the two boys in the film and their commitment to each other is almost heartbreaking. The film will be followed by an educational discussion.

Opening Night

Sunday, May 6

8 p.m. – Steel Toes

2006, 91 minutes, English, Color, Canada

The winner of the fifth annual Sarah and Harold Gottleib Award for Contributions to Jewish Culture

This main attraction is the 2007 winner of the fifth annual Sarah and Harold Gottleib Prize for Contributions to Jewish Culture.

All good art is available on many levels, and on the surface this profound film is about a Jewish attorney required by the system to defend an anti-Semitic, hate-filled criminal who has killed a Pakistani restaurant worker for nothing more than spilling something on his new steel-toed shoes.

Based on writer/co-director David Gow's own play, *Steel Toes* tells the story of court-appointed Jewish lawyer Danny Dunkelman (Oscar Nominee David Strathairn; *Good Night and Good Luck*), who is assigned the case of a skinhead, Mike, accused of this racially motivated murder.

Dunkelman is angry at both the assignment and at Mike (Andrew W. Walker), but then becomes challenged by his unremorseful client, even beginning to examine his own belief that there may, in fact, be a human being worth redeeming in the young man. Strathairn, who actually originated this role on stage, delivers a triumphant performance as Dunkelman and as the two perform an elaborate dance of life and death, it becomes clear that the film is about even more than we thought. It is a finely wrought parable that tries to answer the question about what it "costs" to be one of the "chosen people"—to be Jewish—and by extension, whether or not it is worth it.

This exquisite yet terrible film takes us on a harrowing, rewarding journey with Strathairn's masterfully portrayed Dunkelman as we all learn what the cost of fairness, belief in God and true justice is, and having found out we can all decide for ourselves about whether it is 'right' or if it is too much to pay.

The director of the film has been invited to attend. *Steel Toes* is presented in cooperation with Detroit's Consulate General of Canada and is sponsored by Sarah and Harold Gottleib.

Monday, May 7, 2007

2 p.m. – Blues by the Beach

2006, 90 minutes, English and Hebrew with English subtitles, Color, Israel and USA

A Special Director's Selection

Blues by the Beach is an important film about the direct taking of innocent life for supposedly political purposes. Producer Jack Baxter (*Malcolm X*) focuses on Mike's Place, a popular American bar on the Tel Aviv boardwalk, where there was beer and fun amid the tragedy of the Middle East. A merry bunch until 1 am on April 30, 2003 when Asif Hanif walked in with sophisticated explosives in a hollowed-out Kuran and killed and injured 53, including Baxter who was, ironically, partially shielded by Hanif's own body.

A scene from Blues by the Beach

The film, which started out to be about drinking and fun in Israel becomes quite something else after the attack. Although it is suffused with sorrow for the dead and wounded, it is also Israel in miniature—a whole society determined to pick itself up, dust itself off and start all over again.

Director Joshua Faudem and the Baxters, producers of the film, have been invited to attend.

Preceded by…

Dark Night…2006, 30 minutes, Hebrew, Arabic and Russian with English subtitles, Color, Israel

During their return to their post, three Israeli soldiers run into a deadly ambush. While escaping, they commandeer a Palestinian couple's home to wait for their rescuers. Lack of communication breeds increasing hostility until a small detail is revealed that helps them find common ground. The two sides begin to see their enemies as human beings. New hope seems born, and then… .

A scene from Dark Night

5 p.m. – Checking Out

2005, 95 minutes, English, Color, USA

A Special Director's Selection

Start with Peter Falk, Judge Reinhold, David Paymer, Laura San Giacomo and a host of other stars. Throw in high Hollywood production values, writing and acting and then tell the story of former Yiddish Theater star, Morris Applebaum, who writes to each of his three children that they should come home immediately as he has decided to commit suicide and wants them there.

This witty, honest portrayal of a bizarre Jewish family shows American Jewish culture in the most loving way imaginable. Peter Falk is at the top of his game and is just fun to watch. Reinhold, San Giacomo and Paymer add layers of humor, feeling and family. The wonderful script has a ton of memorable schtick. Watch for Gavin Mcleod (Captain of the "Love Boat") as the doorman.

Director Mark Lane will attend the screening.

8 p.m. – Matisyahu

2005, 11 minutes, English with some Hebrew, Color, USA

Matisyahu, aka Matthew Miller, is a phenomenon and if you want to know what kind of music today's kids are into, you'd better see this short film. In fact, bring them along. Recent recipient of the prestigious Moviefone Grand Prize, it was also named "Most Downloaded," beating out the top 12 films of the year that were selected by an industry panel.

Followed by…

The First Time I Turned Twenty

2004, 97 minutes, French with English subtitles, Color, France

It's the 1960s and Jewish 16-year-old Hannah, the ugly duckling of her affectionate, stifling family, lives in the Paris suburbs with her hard-working father, doting mother and two pretty sisters.

As a talented bass player, her dream is to

A scene from Stolen Summer

(*Crossing Delancey, King of the Corner*), tells the story of the NBA's Jewish pioneers. *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days*, a 2006 Academy Award nominee for Best Foreign Language Film, is the true story of Germany's most famous anti-Nazi heroine. In addition, special guests will join the festival for post-film discussions.

The Ann Arbor Jewish Film Festival is made possible by the Charles and Rita Gelman Educational Foundation, the Michael and Patricia Levine Philanthropic Fund and the Michigan Theater. Ann Arbor chairs are Elaine Margolis, Rachel Seel and Roberta Tankanow. The festival will also take place in Commerce Township, Birmingham, Windsor and Flint. The winner of the 2007 Sarah and Harold Gottleib Award for Contributions to Jewish Culture. *Blues by the Beach* is an important documentary that began as a film about fun in Israel at a Tel Aviv bar called Mike's Place and became something else entirely after a terrorist attack took place at the bar during filming. In *Sentenced to Marriage*, the audience is introduced to the stories of three women trying to obtain a *Get* (divorce) in Israel. With unprecedented access into secret religious courts, viewers witness both amazing suffering and important revelations. *The First Basket,* narrated by Peter Reigert

A scene from Checking Out

be chosen for her school's small, all male touring Jazz band, complete with a cute trumpet player. Well, in a "fair fight" blind audition, she is chosen, and this is where her real troubles begin. Because of her gender, Jewishness, and appearance, the boys in the band begin to play practical jokes on her and she is thoroughly miserable.

This film presents an appealing tale of an underdog who struggles in a hostile environment. The story is laced with dark humor and features a fabulous jazz soundtrack.

Tuesday, May 8, 2007

2 p.m. – Sentenced to Marriage (Mekudeshet)

2004, 65 minutes, English, Hebrew with English subtitles, Color, Israel

The story of how to obtain a *Get* (divorce) in Israel is a difficult but important one. You will see and hear heretofore unprecedented access to private, secret religious courts, amazing suffering and important revelations.

Three young married women are trapped by the religious courts. They can't obtain a divorce because for the court to grant one they need their husband's consent. They don't know when they will be set free because the date of their release depends on their husband's whim. They are forbidden relationships because a

A scene from Sentenced to Marriage

married woman is forbidden to another man. They are condemned to be barren, as a married woman is forbidden to bear another's child. Their voices are silenced because they are young, anonymous women whose pain and suffering is embedded in the law of a democratic country in the 21st century.

The film follows Tamar, Sari and Smadar's Kafkaesque struggle over a period of two years. Each of these three young women is doing all she can to obtain a divorce with the help of a group of female Orthodox rabbinical advocates. Although the focus of the film seems narrow, the overriding issue, Judaism and change in a modern world, crystallizes in this documentary, as it does nowhere else.

The director of the women's organization that financed the film has been invited to attend.

5 p.m. – Paper Dolls

2005, 89 minutes, English, Hebrew and Tagalog with English subtitles, Color, Israel

Good film can take us right to the heart of Israel's most heated topics. This film is about foreign workers in Israel—over 300,000 have been brought in from all over the world since the Intifada reduced Arab worker availability. And while this film may seem "out there," its motive is to uncover the human nugget from the dire and the extreme.

A movie about outsiders, the *Paper Dolls* of the title are transsexual Filipinos who have come to Israel and work as sensitive caregivers, willing to do what needs doing in an Israeli society that has a hard time coming to terms with who does it.

Paper Dolls is a documentary film by award-winning filmmaker Tomer Heymann. The Filipinos have emigrated to Israel to take care of elderly religious Jewish men. On their one day off per week, they perform as drag performers in a group called the Paper Dolls. On the political level, it explores the perils of global immigration. On the human level, the film is about people who are rejected by their own families for being gay/transvestite and who emigrate and end up with jobs taking care of other people's parents who have been rejected by their own children because they are old, difficult, etc.

The men in this film work grueling hours to send money back to the Philippines to support the families that have rejected them. *Paper Dolls* does not soak itself in its subjects' extremity, and so becomes one of those extreme stories that tell us true things about less extreme goings-on.

8 p.m. – The First Basket

100 minutes, English, Black and White, Color, USA

Special Director's Selection

Amazing: basketball, the ultimate *Jewish* sport? Well, owners and managers were, but players, promoters? It seems that everybody was Jewish! The NBA's first points—ever? Scored by Jewish power forward Ossie Schechtman on November 1, 1946 as the New York Knicks beat the Toronto Huskies. *Emmes.*

So add all the names you remember: Red Auerbach, Abe Saperstein, Leo Gottlieb, Ralph Kaplowitz, Max Cohn, Nat Frankel, Sid Gerchick, Meyer Goldman, Manny Kaplan, Solomon 'Bud' Schwartz, Jack Silverman, Sy Rose, Brooms Abromovic, Jerry Fleishman, Hank Rosenstein, Dolph Schayes, Max Zaslofsky and hundreds more.

Most important, director David Vyorst's film, narrated by Peter Reigert (*King of the Corner, Animal House, Crossing Delancey*), is about becoming American. After nostalgia, this wonderful film observes the immigrant experience, discussing the role sports played (and still plays) in weaving the fabric of the US as we know it.

Filmmaker David Vyorst joins us as we watch this meticulously crafted work featuring 50 years of basketball and including everyone from the Harlem Globetrotters to the Celtics, Pistons and Knicks.

Wednesday, May 9, 2007

2 p.m. – Wrestling with Angels: Playwright Tony Kushner

2006, 98 minutes, English, Color, USA

A Special Director's Selection

Whether through *Angels in America, Homebody/Kabul, Caroline, or Change*, the screenplay for *Munich* or his joyful commitment to his partner, Tony Kushner has changed the American arts landscape. His masterful blending of serious questions and pulse-quickening answers have made him the most important Jewish playwright alive, and now we get to see just who he really is.

Slant Magazine said, "*Wrestling with Angels* shows us how Kushner's personal life has shaped his breathtaking plays… how [his father's] lifelong musical interest [had] irrevocable effect on [Kushner's]… work, like *Caroline, or Change*… and his children's book with Maurice Sendak… ."

Academy Award winning director Frieda Lee Mock took almost three years to make this remarkable film.

A scene from Wrestling with Angels

5 p.m. – The Rape of Europa

2006, 96 minutes, English, Color

A Special Director's Selection

The Rape of Europa is a feature documentary based on the National Book Critics Circle Award winning history by Lynn H. Nicholas. The film tells the epic story of the systematic theft, deliberate destruction and miraculous survival of Europe's art treasures during the Third Reich and Second World War. The film interweaves the history of Nazi art looting with the stories of contemporary restitution cases.

From the book jacket: "The fate of the World's art treasures hung in the balance during the destructiveness of the second world war. The cast of characters includes Adolf Hitler, Hermann Goering, Gertrude Stein and Marc Chagall—not to mention works by artists from Leonardo da Vinci to Pablo Picasso. Hitler diverted attention from the prosecution of the war to the systematic theft of Europe's greatest art. His dream of building the world's greatest museum—the Führer Museum in his hometown of Linz, Austria—obsessed him to the bitter end."

But it does not end there. The film also tells the dramatic story of the unprecedented heroic efforts of the US Monuments Men who were sent to Europe to safeguard and return displaced art at the end of the war.

8 p.m. – The Tribe

2005, 17 minutes, English, Color, USA

If a movie claimed to cover 5,768 years of Jewish history, customs, religion, culture, fights and other tumult in 17 minutes, you would pay just to see the trick, right? Well, this is your chance. New age media with old age material from an Oscar-nominated director whose parents were Detroiters, Tiffany Shlain.

John Columbus, founder and director of

A scene from The Tribe

the Black Maria Film Festival says, "The Tribe is a brilliant, irreverent, wry and buoyant film about an icon of American culture, the waspy Barbie doll and its creator, a Jewish woman. The film is a stunning achievement and I love it and so do audiences."

Followed by… Only Human

2004, 88 minutes, Spanish with English subtitles, Color, Spain

Starring Oscar-nominated Norma Aleandro, this glorious family comedy reworks the age-old story of meeting the parents—but this time with a hilarious up-to-the-minute Jewish twist. Using a skillful blend of warmth and humor, this picture addresses head-on what happens when cultures clash within our very homes.

When Leni comes home to introduce her fiancé Rafi to her idiosyncratic Spanish Jewish family, everything goes smoothly until the lovers belatedly reveal that Rafi is Palestinian. Amid the ensuing hysteria, Rafi escapes to the kitchen to help prepare the dinner but drops the soup he was trying to defrost out of the seventh story window, hitting a pedestrian below. And just in case the evening's not going badly enough, it turns out the pedestrian may be Leni's father.

Thursday, May 10, 2007

2 p.m. – Sister Rose's Passion

2004, 36 minutes, English, Color, USA

This story of Sister Rose, a Dominican Nun, rekindles faith in what any human being can accomplish.

This film is a poignant testament to the human spirit and director Oren Jacoby has captured an unprecedented sense of right and wrong that has changed the lives of millions of Christians.

Born in 1920, Sister Rose Thering spent over 50 years challenging authority, particularly institutionalized anti-semitism and bigotry inside the Catholic Church. Drawing on scripture and deeply held religious beliefs, Sister Rose spoke out for tolerance and understanding. When she met Pope John Paul II, she said what she thought and got her way.

Continued onpage 8

Followed by…

Queen of the Mountain

2005, 56 minutes, English, Color, USA

A Special Director's Selection

Theresa Goell started her career as an archeologist with four strikes against her: she was female, divorced, Jewish working with Mus-

A scene from Queen of the Mountain

lims and hearing impaired. Yet she abandoned the comfortable lifestyle with her conservative Jewish family in 1933 to pursue her pioneering passion at Nemrud Dagh, an isolated, mysterious mountaintop in southwestern Turkey.

Struggling with hearing, her extraordinary site work also included bringing roads, tourists and employment to the impoverished locals. After spending most of her life there as an outsider, Goell became 'Queen of the Mountain', gaining worldwide attention for her work and finding a new home among the mountain Kurds.

Martha Goell Lubell's tender film take the shape of an epic adventure and Theresa's saga lives through breathtaking National Geographic footage of the excavations, hundreds of photographs and finally, Goell's own stunning oral history and letters, read by Tovah Feldshuh.

Lovingly restoring the legacy of this pioneering Jewish woman, *Queen of the Mountain* offers a unique, intriguing portrait.

5 p.m. – Sophie Scholl: The Final Days

2005, 111 minutes, English, Color, Germany and USA

A Special Director's Selection

Everyone didn't give in to Hitler, at least at first. One group, The White Rose, specialized in circulating positions contrary to the Third Reich as a matter of academic/intellectual pride. They were caught early by the Nazis and this achingly well-made film follows three members of this group as we watch trials that quickly escalate into a searing test of wills. Sophie Scholl delivers a haunting, timeless, passionate call to freedom and personal responsibility.

This true story of Germany's most famous anti-Nazi heroine is brought to life in this multi-award winning film. It was a 2006 Academy Award nominee for Best Foreign Language Film and stars Julia Jentsch in a luminous performance as the young student-turned-fearless activist. Using actual, long-buried historical records of her incarceration, director Marc Rothermund hypnotically recreates the last six days of Sophie Scholl's life; a heart-stopping journey from arrest to interrogation, trial and sentence.

Preceded by…

***Raoul Wallenberg:* One Person Can Make a Difference**

2006, 11 minutes, English, Color, USA

Emmy Award winning filmmaker Harvey Ovshinsky and the Raoul Wallenberg Society of Ann Arbor have put together this brief dedication to the Wallenberg (a former student at the University of Michigan) legacy. This is important, both as a dedication and as history. This film is a miniature masterpiece.

8 p.m. – King of Beggars

2006, 98 minutes, Hebrew with English subtitles, Color, Israel and Poland

A Special Director's Selection

Inside a 16th century Polish cemetery, two social outcasts are joined in matrimony under a moonlit sky. Fishke, a lame bath attendant weds a mysterious blind woman who wandered to the village only days before. But soon, Fishke learns that his new wife is really a member of a group of Jewish brigands out to rob the town. She runs but Fishke follows her, believing she is his lawful wife in the eyes of God.

When he catches her though, he finds a world he did not know existed—one filled with Jewish outlaws who victimize other Jews. He escapes, but the leader tracks him down, demanding revenge but finds defeat at the hands of the young Torah scholar/warrior to whom the beggars now turn to for leadership.

Fishke, who believes in earning rights by fulfilling one's duties, sets out to liberate his people and earn his torn 'nation' its own piece of land. A surprising and unique tale of a Jewish Robin Hood. ■

A scene from King of Beggars

Gala Opening from page 1

The feature film shown that evening will be *Steel Toes*. Based on writer/co-director David Gow's own play, *Steel Toes* tells the story of court-appointed Jewish lawyer Danny Dunkelman (Oscar Nominee David Strathairn; *Good Night and Good Luck*), who is assigned the case of a skinhead, Mike, accused of a racially motivated murder. ■

Tickets to the Film Festival screenings are $10. A Film Festival Pass, good for all 19 films, is $65. Ticket order forms and a full festival schedule are available on the JCC website, www.jccannarbor.org. If you are interested in becoming a Film Festival sponsor and attending the reception, contact Leslie Bash or Rachel Rosenthal at the JCC at 971-0990.

Holocaust Remembrance from page 1

raised as Christians and grew up under assumed names, first in Dutch farm country, and then in a fishing village. After the war the Dahme girls were reunited with their parents.

The Hidden Child is an outgrowth of a July 2004 trip to the Netherlands with Dahme and a contingent of 20 New Jersey school teachers. Chronicled by an award-winning production team, the film captures Dahme's return to the Dutch farmhouse and countryside where she had been hidden as a child and documents her emotional reunion with one of the Christian women who saved her life.

The film also follows Dahme and the teachers to Vught, a Nazi concentration camp, and to the Anne Frank house as well as to the old Jewish quarters of Amsterdam, recording reactions to both the Maud Dahme story and the Nazi's systematic destruction of Jewish life in the Netherlands. *The Hidden Child* features interviews with Pieter Meerburg, an 83-year-old Dutch rescuer whose Amsterdam student group saved hundreds of Jewish children; Max Arpels Lezer, a former hidden child, who is now chairman of the Hidden Child Association of the Netherlands; his Excellency Clifford Sobel, then US Ambassador to the Netherlands; and his Excellency Eitan Margalit, Israeli Ambassador to the Netherlands. The award-winning production team includes Sara Lee Kessler, host, senior producer and writer; Lisa Bair Miller, producer and editor; and Ron Wagner as principal photographer.

Playing for Time

The much-anticipated Arthur Miller Theater opened at the University of Michigan in late March with performances of Miller's harrowing play of the Holocaust, *Playing for Time*. Now, the AADL and the U-M collaborate for a screening of the rarely seen 1980 CBS film that won multiple Emmy awards. *Playing For Time* will be shown at the Downtown Library on Monday, April 16 from 6 to 8:30 p.m.

This drama features an all-star cast and tells the story of a group of women prisoners in Auschwitz who survived the gas chambers by playing in a small orchestra. This is a powerful adaptation of Holocaust survivor Fania Fanelon's autobiography. Fanelon, a Jewish singer-pianist, was imprisoned in the Auschwitz concentration camp during World War II. She was able to stay alive by becoming a member of the prison's female orchestra. In the process, she struck up a close relationship with Alma Rose, the musical group's leader, as well as the other members of the band. Playing for the Nazis, however, robbed the women of much of their dignity and some of them questioned whether remaining alive was worth the abuse they constantly suffered.

The acclaimed film features Vanessa Redgrave as Fania and Jane Alexander as Alma—both Emmy winners for their heartbreaking roles. Christine Baranski, Viveca Lindfors, Melanie Mayron and Marisa Berenson are among the many prominent actresses who appeared in this landmark film, which was named best Television Movie of the Year. Arthur Miller also won an Emmy for his powerful script.

Playwright Arthur Miller was a prominent figure in American literature and cinema for over 61 years, writing a wide variety of plays, including *The Crucible, A View from the Bridge, All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*. He was the recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama among many other awards. At the time of his death Miller was considered one of the greatest American playwrights of all time.

Shanghai Remembered

It is a little known item of World War II history that about 20,000 Jews fled Nazi Europe to escape to Shanghai. On Friday, April 20, from 7 to 8:30 p.m., this period in history will be brought to light as former refugee Berl Falbaum tells his story along with others collected in the gripping book of memories *Shanghai Remembered... Stories of Jews Who Escaped to Shanghai from Nazi Europe*. This event, co-sponsored by the Eastern Michigan University Hillel, will also feature a book signing and books will be on sale at the event.

Shanghai Remembered is a collection of first-person accounts telling how the refugees found themselves traumatized, stateless and penniless in a strange and inhospitable place. The editor, Berl Falbaum, was a former Shanghai refugee himself, and has since spent 10 years as a reporter at *The Detroit News*; four years as administrative aide to Michigan's lieutenant governor; and 15 years as a corporate public relations executive.

In the 1930s, as anti-Semitism was spreading like a cancer, Jews from various parts of Europe discovered, through word of mouth or information from travel agencies, that Shanghai was an open port. No visas or passports were required. About 20,000 refugees made the decision to flee from impending extermination—leaving behind their highly civilized and sophisticated culture for a haven that could not have been more unlike the life they had experienced. What was their new life like? How did they survive? What did they leave behind? Editor Berl Falbaum will share his own story during this event. ■

All three events are free and open to the public. They will be held in the Downtown Library Multi-Purpose Room, 343 S. Fifth Avenue. For more information, contact the library at 327-4560.

Tim Grimes contributed to this article.

Downtown Library Holocaust Remembrance Events

Monday, April 9,
7–8:30 p.m.
Documentary film
The Hidden Child

Monday, April 16,
6–8:30 p.m.
Award-winning film
Playing for Time

Friday, April 20,
7–8:30 p.m.
Berl Falbaum presents his book
Shangai Remembered...Stories of Jews Who Escaped to Shanghai from Nazi Germany

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April 2007 SPICE* of Life

***Social, Physical, Intellectual, Cultural, and Educational Programs for Adults**

All events are free unless a fee is listed. Programs are cancelled when the Ann Arbor Public Schools are closed.

Mondays

April 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

11 a.m.–noon: Fitness Fun with Maria Farquhar, $4 or 3/$10

Noon–1 p.m.: Buffet of dairy delights, $3.

1–2:30 p.m.: Writing Group: Express yourself through personal recollections, poetry and fiction. No previous writing experience required.

Tuesdays

April 3, 10, 17, 24

10:30–noon: Arts and Crafts: Bring something that you are working on or participate in group project. Coffee and noshes are provided.

noon–2:30 p.m.: Mah Jongg

Tuesday, April 10

10:30 a.m.–noon: Arts and Crafts: Make your own greeting cards. Bring in paper, ribbons and other materials. Instruction provided.

7:15 p.m.: Evening Entertainment Excursion: Enjoy a trip to see the University Choir and Orpheus Singers at Hill Auditorium. Meet at the JCC. Transportation $6. RSVP by April 1 to Abbie at 769-0209 or Laurie W. at 971-0990.

Tuesday, April 17

7:15 p.m.: Evening Entertainment Excursion Enjoy a trip to see the University Symphony Orchestra at Hill Auditorium. Meet at the JCC. Transportation $6. RSVP by April 8 to Abbie at 769-0209 or Laurie W. at 971-0990.

Thursdays

April 5, 12, 19, 26

10–11 a.m.: Fitness Fun with Maria Farquhar, $4 or 3/$10

11 am–noon: Current Events with Heather Dombey

Noon–1 p.m.: Yummy Kosher lunch, $3.

Thursday, April 5

1–2:30 p.m. "Shalom Y'All" student presentation Students from the Sol Drachler Program share stories and photos of their visit to Jews in the deep South.

4–6 p.m. Traditional Community-wide Senior Seder For all older adults and their families, $15. RSVP ASAP to Abbie at 769-0209.

Thursday, April 12

Civic Life Series

1 p.m. "Civic Engagement in the Neighborhood: Building Community from the Ground Up". Marti Bombyk, L.M.S.W., Ph.D. will speak.

Thursday, April 19

Civic Life Series

1 p.m. "Making Volunteerism Meaningful". With Jewish Family Services Volunteer Coordinator, Elizabeth Solomon.

Thursday, April 26

1–2:30 p.m. "Argentine Jews/ Jewish Argentines." With Dr. Judith Laikin Elkin

Who are the Argentine Jews? How do Jews accommodate to life in the southern hemisphere? In what ways are they similar to North American Jews, and how do they differ? A short talk will be followed by audience participation.

Fridays

Fridays, April 6, 20 and 27

Yiddish Speaking and Reading Group. All levels welcome. Call JCC 971-0990.

Friday, April 13

1:30–3:30 p.m. Monthly Yiddish Group: Yiddish Film (with Czech Subtitles). The Shop on Main Street. Oscar-winning film with Ida Kaminska. JCC Newman Room. 971-0990

Friday, April 13

1:30 p.m.: Matinée Musicale Refreshments, 2 p.m. performance: Arie Lipsky and Friends. Cost: $7.00/person. The Matinée Musicale Series is a five-concert recital series of classical music presented by Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra Music Director Arie Lipsky and the A2SO's brass, string, and woodwind ensembles.

Sunday, April 22

3–5 p.m. Jewish Family Services Bat Mitzvah Cruise. Choral concert

Haverim Visharim with Marilyn Krimm at JCC.

4–8 p.m. Jewish Family Services Bat Mitzvah Cruise. Set sail for the JFS Bat Mitzvah Cruise, a celebration and commemoration of our 13 year history of providing needed human services to the community. The event will feature cruise-inspired activities, food and fun for all ages at Travis Pointe Country Club. Call 769-0209 for more information.

JFS: Cruising thru 13 years welcoming strangers and promoting freedom

Carol Lessure, special to the WJN

As we prepare for Passover by cleaning, cooking, and considering ways to enliven our seder services, Jewish Family Services reflects on its 13 years of providing a safe haven to those in need and basic needs to "all who hunger."

JFS will celebrate and commemorate this milestone in a unique event: The JFS Bat Mitzvah Cruise on Sunday, April 22, from 5–8 p.m. at Travis Pointe Country Club. Attendees can enjoy a cruise-inspired evening without leaving dry land.

Some of the accomplishments of JFS over the past 13 years include:

- Welcoming strangers – resettling 300 refugees and helping them adjust to our community
- Feeding the hungry and sheltering the poor – leveraging over $30,000 in financial assistance from partners to aid hundreds of families in need of rent, food, utility payments, and clothing
- Promoting freedom and self-sufficiency – guiding hundreds of unemployed people to new jobs
- Protecting the elderly – easing the lives of 300 older adults in the community

In reaching this bat mitzvah year, the agency has relied on hundreds of volunteers and supporters to keep the agency vital and responsive to the community needs.

The cruise-themed celebration will include a strolling international-themed dinner and champagne toasts. Attendees can choose among a variety of "excursions" including a wine tasting by Intermezzo magazine editor Becky Sue Epstein, floor show with Emcee "Big Al Muskovito" of the WOMC Dick Purtan Show, caricaturist, magician, games of Mah Jong or tennis, and service oriented projects such as JFS Lifecycle Story Corps and Crafts for Clients.

What would a cruise be without entertainment? The JFS Bat Mitzvah Cruise will offer a multigenerational Newlywed-style game show, music and dancing to the sounds of past decades, and B'nai Mitzvah Karaoke where you can relive the good, bad, and funky tunes from your 13th year.

And this cruise offers children—middle school age and up—their own tropical pool party with pizza dinner, DJ and activities. So the whole family can enjoy a little Mitzvah magic during the JFS Bat Mitzvah Cruise.

"I hope everyone in the community will come to celebrate the work of JFS at our Cruise-inspired event in April. The Ann Arbor Jewish community has been able to nurture and grow a social service agency that can distinguish itself as both the prime source of support for Jews in the area and a key provider of services to the community at large," stated Steve Gerber, board member and chair of the JFS Friends of the Family Committee.

Margie Checkoway, JFS board president added, "The professional staff and volunteers demonstrate daily their commitment to improving the lives of every member of the community, whether it be an unemployed worker, a senior who needs living assistance, a young person who is engaged in risky behavior, a person with depression, or a newly arrived individual or family who is resettling in the U.S. JFS is there for all of us when we need emotional, social, or financial support. The JFS Cruise will mark a milestone year while launching the agency into adulthood and the future. Please help us commemorate the hard work of the past that has provided a safety net, the current work that is improving lives, and the future work that will enrich the community."

The cruise event will honor those who have made a significant contribution to the agency's past, present, and future. Youth who have volunteered their time to special projects, tireless board members, charitable donors, and members of the community who resettled Russian Jews and provided support services before JFS existed—all played a significant role in the success of JFS – Your Family in the Community.

Climb aboard the JFS Bat Mitzvah Cruise for a community-wide celebration. Reserve your berth online at www.jfsannarbor.org for a very special evening. ■

JFS seeks young artists for card contest

Carol Lessure, special to the WJN

Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County invites young artists (from ages 1–18) to design three new tribute cards for lifecycle events including celebrations (all accomplishments from new baby to new job), wedding/anniversaries, and in remembrance of loved ones.

Winners of the JFS Tribute card contest will have their designs printed and sent all around the country as community members honor and remember others with donations to JFS. All entries will be on display at the JFS Bat Mitzvah Cruise on Sunday, April 22, at Travis Pointe Country Club. JFS will recognize all artists and announce the winners and prizes for participants at the Cruise. The original artwork of winning entries will be framed and on display at the new JFS offices.

Are you an artist seeking to contribute your art to a meaningful project? If so, design a card—no words necessary—and submit your entry by 3:30 p.m. on April 13, 2007 to JFS. Entries may be dropped off either to the JFS mailbox at the JCC or at the new JFS offices on 2245 South State Street. Look for entry forms at the JFS office, JCC, and area religious schools or download a form from www.jfsannarbor.org.

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33 YEARS IN PRACTICE

Civic life and community engagement receives attention in new JCC series

Abigail Lawrence-Jacobson, special to the WJN

The Jewish Community Center of Washtenaw County will present a new series on "Civic Life and Community Engagement," which will bring scholars, community organizers, authors, researchers, and community members to speak on topics ranging from volunteerism to voting. The hope is that these monthly or bi-monthly presentations will spark a dialogue on the many ways to build a vibrant and engaged community for all ages. Two April events are planned. On April 12 at 1 p.m., Eastern Michigan University professor Marti Bombyk will speak on "Civic Engagement in the Neighborhood: Building Community from the Ground Up" as she recounts the process of organizing resident councils in Ypsilanti. On April 19 at 1 p.m. Jewish Family Services Volunteer Services committee chair Elizabeth Solomon who will discuss the purpose and meaning of volunteerism. Both events will be held at the JCC and are free and open to the public.

Civic renewal… Social Capital… Engaged Citizenship… Civil Society. What are these buzz words all about? Are they relevant to the Jewish community? Read any newspaper, sociology journal, or news magazine, and you're bound to come across a mention of troublesome trends in mainstream society, including declining public participation (as notably documented in Robert Putnam's 2000 book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*), growing cynicism, low voter turnout, and declining trust and social bonds among neighbors, families, and communities. Many social scientists and critics are concerned that, as Putnam wrote, "the bonds that connect us at the local level and serve as an essential counterbalance to American individualism have fallen into grave disrepair." In response, initiatives are springing up across the country to stem the erosion of community life and to strengthen the social fabric of communities. Locally, both the Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti Reads 2007 program ("We the People…") and the University of Michigan Theme Semester focus on the process of fostering a sense of civic engagement, community, and a sense of belonging in the modern world.

The JCC's "Civic Life and Community Engagement" series was launched in March with a community-wide discussion of the Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti Reads book choice, Tracy Kidder's *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, a Man Who Would Cure the World* (Random House, 2003). In addition to the two events in April, an event is planned for May 17 at 1:30 p.m. at the JCC. Jeff Bernstein, associate professor of political science at EMU, will present a discussion of Putnam's book *Bowling Alone*, and the decline of social capital and civic participation in the United States. Bernstein will address the implications of Putnam's arguments for democracy and policymaking. Stay tuned for additional presentations as part of the new "Civic Life and Community Engagement" series. For more information, contact Abbie Lawrence-Jacobson at 769-0209. ■

2007 JCC Matinée Musicale Series

The opening JCC Matinée Musicale concert featuring members of the Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra will take place on Friday, April 13, at the Jewish Community Center of Washtenaw County. The event will begin with a sit-down dessert at 1:30 p.m. where patrons and musicians can meet. Concert-goers will enjoy a one-hour concert at 2 p.m. while seated at tables in the performance hall. This concert will feature AASO Maestro Arie Lipsky and Friends.

The five-part concert series will also include the Brass Quintet, who will perform old-time favorites including the "Best of Broadway" and Swing tunes on Wednesday, May 16; the Woodwind Quintet will perform a special concert in honor of Daniel Pearl Day on Wednesday, October 10; the Wednesday, November 14 concert will be announced soon; and finally, Arie Lipsky and Friends will perform on Wednesday, December 5.

Tickets cost $7 at the door. For more information or to register, please call Laurie Wechter at 971-0990 or Abbie Lawrence-Jacobson at 769-0209.

Volunteers needed for Bookstock Sale

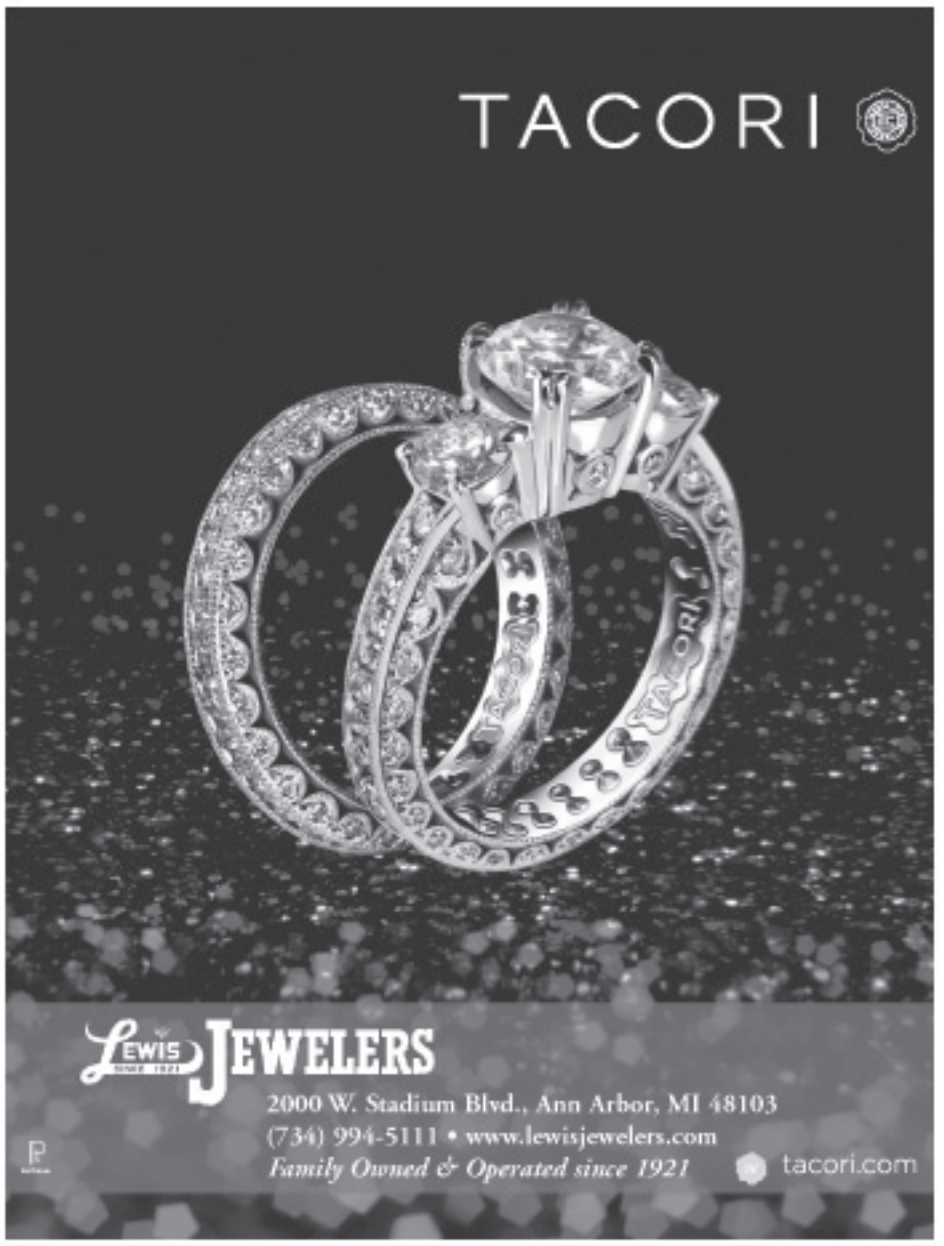
The Jewish Community Center of Washtenaw County is looking for volunteers to participate in this year's Bookstock Used Book and Media Sale from April 29 through May 6 at Laurel Park Place Mall. All proceeds go to benefit participating organizations, including the JCC. Your volunteer hours support literacy, the community, and the JCC all at the same time. For more information, or to volunteer, contact Rachel Rosenthal at 971-0990 or rachelrosenthal@jccfed.org.

ORT Bowling and Dinner Fundraiser April 21

Join Ann Arbor ORT for an dinner, bowling, and fun on Saturday, April 21. The evening will begin at 6 p.m. with dinner at the Colonial Lanes Restaurant. Those who would like to bowl will begin at 7 p.m. (three games). Each participant will purchase her own dinner and there is a $10 charge for bowling and shoes. Remember, you don't have to be good at bowling to have a great time. There will also be fun prizes and a silent auction of dinner gift certificates.

Today, through its network of schools, colleges and centers, ORT strives to meet the training and education needs of its nearly 275,000 students, young and old, from every corner of the world so that they can compete in today's rapidly changing market. To learn more about ORT, visit www.waort.org.

For more information on the April 21 dinner and bowling, contact Barbara Goodsitt at 662-6671 or b.goodsitt@comcast.net or email Brenda Riemer at briemer@emich.edu. Also contact Barbara or Brenda if you are not able to attend but are interested in being a sponsor and making a pledge to support ORT.



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A Torah of one's own

Peggy Adler, special to the WJN

Until I was introduced to Pardes Hannah, Ann Arbor's Jewish Renewal community, I'd been living in Ann Arbor for eight years without finding a congregation that felt, to me, like home. Since arriving from New York, I had long surrendered to being a synagogue-goer-at-large, vying for tickets on high holidays, crashing services at Hillel. To find Pardes Hannah, I had to go all the way to Israel where an artist in Safed told me that upon my return, I should find Pardes Hannah's rabbi, Elliot Ginsburg. Thankfully, I did.

Since leaving New York—home to as many flavors of spiritual practices as designer dog breeds—I'd had trouble finding the hybrid community for me. Renewal Judaism finds her roots in Hasidism, within an egalitarian framework, while drawing from traditions of Jewish mysticism and music. As a fiction writer who had never learned to read Hebrew, yet was drawn to the Torah as what Renewal circles call "Deep Story," it was here that I found a place.

In Pardes Hannah, I've found a community in which members wrestle with their own inner-*halachah*. A spiritual community that, like many others, believes that despite the pundit-deemed culture war often perpetuated in our university culture, intellect and faith are no less connected than the mind and the heart.

Looking back, I can see why it took me all this time to find Pardes Hannah, why our lives intersected at this particular point on our respective journeys. Pardes Hannah is in her 13th year. She has been preparing. Now, as her coming-of-age lifecycle would have it, she is ready to receive her Torah.

The preparation of b'nai mitzvah includes the formal (Torah study), and the informal (each regret); the tangible (Hebrew school), and the intangible (each sensory awakening). It is possible to argue that everything in that child's life, preceding that day, has led to that moment, standing on the pulpit, reading the haftorah portion determined by, and therefore on, their date of birth.

B'nai mitzvah often speak of the Torah in awe, fear, even disdain. Never, though, have I heard b'nai mitvah wonder how they should be so lucky as to have access to a Torah. Some, the sensitive, have pondered over how there could possibly be so many Torahs when each is hand-lettered, taking a year to scribe; when we have lost so many to war, fire. Still, asking b'nai mitzvah to wonder how their synagogue should be so fortunate as to possess one of the world's holy scrolls is like asking a child raised with shelter to contemplate his luck. Synagogues, we can safely assume, have a Torah. Often many. Some might argue that the Torah is what makes a synagogue a synagogue; that the text itself creates place, the way language preceded the creation of the universe.

At Pardes Hannah, spirit creates place, and members have trusted that they can study Torah without actually owning one. Of course, there is the Torah as metaphor, for, really, everything, in the sense that all our lives are Torah study. But, too, over the years, Pardes Hannah members have made complicated arrangements to borrow an actual Sefer Torah. For particular holidays, members from Toledo have driven a borrowed Torah up and down US-23, seat-belted tightly in back. ("Torah On Board"?) At other times, Beth Israel Congregation, whose Rabbi Dobrusin and congregation have been kind enough to house our off-off-broadway-like shabbat minyan, has lent us their sacred text. It is our hope to be in a position soon to help other small Jewish communities seeking to borrow a Torah.

My own quest for Torah began when I turned 40, one year ago. Months earlier, I'd had a sharp, almost physical awareness that I needed to mark my passage by going to Israel, where I hadn't been since I was 16. I made my pilgrimage over U-M's short spring break, and had a trip so rich, it seemed to me the oil had burned for each of my eight days there. On this journey, one thing led to another on a trail of connections that seemed, as things do in Israel, beyond my power. I followed the bread crumbs, and when the artist in Safed told me that I must meet Elliot Ginsburg and he would introduce me to my community, something told me to put an asterisk in my journal: on this I would follow up.

I did not.

Instead, upon my return to Ann Arbor I realized that I needed to turn around and spend my summer in Israel, making the end of my teaching semester crazed. And yet, when I was getting my hair cut the day before leaving town, by a person I'd never been to before, and he told me that the man coming in after me was also spending the summer in Israel, I was unsurprised to find that the man's name was Elliot. This was the way things had worked since I'd been to Israel; the universe offered signs, and when I didn't honor them, second chances.

Last summer, I arrived in Jerusalem just in time for Shavuot, the day the Torah was given to Moses on Mount Sinai. I learned that had I ever been bat mitzvahed, which I had not, my Torah parashah would have been Mishpatim: Moses has been traveling on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights; he is ready to receive the Torah. I had been traveling in the desert, on the mountain, for 40 years, I thought. I, too, was ready for my Torah. That summer, I was fortunate to spend time with Rabbi Elliot Ginsburg in Jerusalem. I also befriended an artist, Yitzhak Greenfield, whose late, Yemenite wife's name was Zipporah, making him a modern day Moses. Although I couldn't read a single letter of Hebrew, I was inexplicably drawn to his stark print of the aleph bet, seemingly illuminated. I purchased it knowing that it was beyond my comprehension; that yet, somehow, it belonged to me, the way it is said that we are given the Torah in the womb and forget it upon birth. It is our life's work, then, to return to what we already know.

On my journey home from Israel, on Tisha B'Av, I lost the print. Twice. First, I lost it in London, Heathrow. Panicked, I ran to the Lost and Found, assuming this was futile. Amazingly, the print was there. From that point forward, I guarded it carefully, as if it were my passport, my identity. And yet somehow, again, in Newark, I lost the print of the aleph bet. I ran back to each place I'd been, searching frantically, but this time the print was gone, never to be recovered. Emptied, I was reminded of how at first, Moses shattered the commandments he'd received. The people weren't ready for them. I can't help wondering, though, if Moses, too, wasn't ready, as we are all mirrors for each other. Perhaps too much came in for Moses too suddenly, and when he returned from the mountain, back to his life on ground level, he found the knowledge too much to hold. Just as we can lose our temper with our children for mirroring our own shortcomings, so did Moses with the people, breaking the commandments in a fit of frustration. He would have to prepare himself, again, with compassion and humility, to make his journey back to Mount Sinai, this time prepared to live with what he received.

Peggy Adler in Israel

Since arriving back to Ann Arbor, I've been embraced by Pardes Hannah and her ever-growing community. The name Pardes Hannah is a rough translation of Ann Arbor into Hebrew: the orchard, or Arbor, of Ann. When I chose a Hebrew name for myself just a few years ago in order to sign a friend's ketubah, I chose Ayla, a small oak tree, and so it is with Pardes Hannah that I have planted myself. Each member, I've found, is on his own spiritual journey, committed to her own growth, and each person's presence bears the weight, and gift, of being a pillar of support to the other, a tree in the orchard of Ann.

I've started, too, to learn Hebrew. With only half the letters, I hear myself sound out, with the slowness of a child: Sha-lom, Rebbe, Av-ra-ham.

Last month, I was invited to join Pardes Hannah's Torah Fundraising Committee along with long-time members. When we realized that Pardes Hannah was in her 13th year, her birthright year to receive her Torah, Miriam Brysk, a member and holocaust survivor, said that when we received our Torah, she would be bat mitzvahed as she was unable to do as a child. Board member Lucinda Kurtz put her hand on top of Miriam's: she had always planned to be bat mitzvahed on her 60th birthday, in one year, and she, too, would do so with our first Torah. I laid my hand on top of theirs. By then, I said, I'd be reading Hebrew, and when Mishpatim came around, I, too, would have my bat mitzvah. I would be ready; ready this time to hold on to my Torah.

In our small havurah, everyone is preparing. One member has volunteered to create the Torah cover, another a band, a wimple, ceremonial pomegranates, a yad.

Like a family preparing to adopt, we don't yet know our Torah's story, where it will come from, but we trust that it is on its way to us, as we are to it. As we raise ourselves to the occasion of our union, so, too, we are raising the money we will need. With the help of many members, we are hosting a benefit concert at the Kerrytown Concert Hall, featuring Ian Cumming, violin, and Renee Robbins, piano, along with Noah Ginsburg and Friends Jazz Trio Ensemble. We would appreciate your presence, your ears, your support as we call in our Sefer Torah in the true spirit of prayer, like Miriam in the desert: with music.

We are ready—ready for our heart to manifest—as the Torah is seen as the heart of creation. According to Hasidic teachings, the first letter of the Torah is Bet of Bereshit—"In the beginning." The last is Lamed, of Yisrael. Together, they spell *Lev*, heart, and the name of one of our youngest and most beloved congregants.

Rabbi Elliot Ginsburg shared this teaching by Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev: we must learn not only to read the black letters of the Torah, but also its white spaces. Ginsburg himself adds, "As we prepare to receive a Torah, we are committed to wrestling with, and hearing, what is written, even as we hold ourselves open to the larger mystery: to silences not yet plumbed, melodies still unheard." ■

The Torah Benefit Concert will take place at the Kerrytown Concert House, 415 North Fourth Avenue, on Sunday, April 29, at 7 p.m. Tickets, ranging from $5 for students to $25, can be reserved by calling Kerrytown at 769-2999.

What's happening in April at Temple Beth Emeth

Devon Fitzig, special to the WJN

Yom Hashoah Service

Sunday, April 22, 6:30 to 7:30 pm, in the TBE Sanctuary, there will be a commemorative Holocaust Memorial Service taking place during religious school, created by members of the Generations After group and their children. The service will feature music, the narratives of Holocaust survivors and photos of their lives before and after the war. Refreshments will follow this powerful service. Open to the community.

Adult Hebrew Courses Spring Semester

Biblical and Conversational Hebrew with Beginning, Intermediate and Advanced levels. The six-week class begins the week of April 15. Winter and spring semesters are a continuation of the fall semester. New students may be able to join the classes, depending on their skill level. For more information, contact Devon Fitzig, dfitzig@templebethemeth.org or call 665-4744.

Kohelet (Ecclesiastes), Job and Maimonides

Instructor: Rabbi Robert Levy, Sundays, April 1, 15, 29 and May 6 from 7:45–9 pm. Modern issues about the meaning of life in ancient garb is the topic. It is almost scary the "contemporary" ways that these three writers approached the struggle of living.

Women's Rosh Chodesh

Sunday, April 29, 6:30 to 7:30 pm, TBE Chapel, Topic: Janice Gutfreund will lead a discussion on Conversion. Co-sponsored by Caring Community and the TBE Sisterhood, each short service is followed by a discussion, study session, or special presentation. Open to the community. After this meeting, Women's Rosh Chodesh will resume in the fall. To subscribe to the Rosh Chodesh email list, or to lead a service or discussion, contact Susan Harris, srh@umich.edu or 668-7864.

Movie Tuesday: *The Forgotten Refugees*

April 17, 1-3 p.m., film followed by discussion. Coffee, tea and a nosh will be provided. Buried beneath the headlines of the Middle East conflict is the forgotten story of the region's indigenous Jewish communities. The *Forgotten Refugees*, a film produced by The David Project and IsraTV, tells the story of the hundreds of thousands who fled their homes, who endured in refugee camps, and who today quietly carry the memory of a destroyed civilization.

Following the film, TBE member, Alfred Gourdji, will discuss growing up as a Jew in Iran.

God's Top Ten: The Essential Commandments

Tikkun Leil Shavuot Adult Study Session with Rabbi Levy, Tuesday, May 22, 9 p.m. Enjoy some Torah learning and cheesecake.

Continuing Jewish Meditation

Counting the Omer—The time between Pesach and Shavuot is the traditional time in Judaism to do self reflection and work on our soul traits. A process dating back to Kabbalistic times sets in place a method for systematically doing this. Open to beginning or experienced meditators. April 4, 18, 25; May 9, 16, 23

Families with Young Children

For families with kids aged zero to five years old. Older siblings and grandparents are welcome. Non members are welcome at all events. For more information, contact Devon Fitzig, dfitzig@templebethemeth.org or 665-4744 or Jill Pritts, jillpritts@yahoo.com.

Tot Shabbat, April 13 and May 11, 5:30 pm Tot Shabbat followed by a Tot Dinner at 6 p.m., $3 per person for the dinner, RSVP to 665-4744 a week in advance.

Shira, music for young families is at 6:30 p.m. in the sanctuary.

Tots at Urban Toddler

Sunday, April 22, 10:30 a.m., $5 per child, pay at the door. A great time to play, relax and meet other families. RSVP to Jenny Small at jennylee27@hotmail.com or call 665-4744 by April 18.

Twenties & Thirties (TNT) Events

TNT Break Pesach at Pizza House, Tuesday, April 10, 7 p.m. Pay for your own dinner. RSVP to Jessica at jegoldbe@umich.edu by April 3.

Twenties and Thirties (TNT) of Temple Beth Emeth provides a welcoming, inclusive Jewish community through monthly social and cultural activities. Non-TBE members are welcome. Visit our website at http://www.templebethemeth.org/tnt

Activities at Beth Israel Congregation

Elliot Sorkin, special to the WJN

Passover Services

Passover morning services are held in the Beth Israel Sanctuary on the first two days of Passover, April 3 and April 4, and on the last two days of Passover April 9 and April 10. All the services begin at 9:30 a.m. The Yizkor service takes place on April 10.

Lunch and Laugh Series

On Wednesdays, April 11, 18, and 25, from noon–1:15 p.m. Rabbi Robert Dobrusin will discuss some of the famous Jewish comedians of the past as well as look at the participants lives to find humor in their own Jewish experiences. All sessions take place in the lower level of the Garfunkel – Schteingart Activities Center (2010 Washtenaw). Participants are asked to bring a dairy lunch. Drinks and desserts will be provided. There is no charge for this drop-in series.

Teen Shabbat and Kids' Kiddush

On Saturday, April 28 at 9:30 a.m. teens take over the Shabbat morning service, include reading from the Torah, leading prayers, and even delivering the sermon. After Shabbat services, at about 12:15 p.m. everyone present will be treated to a "Kids' Kiddush," a Kiddush planned and prepared by interested fifth and sixth graders, under the supervision of Nikki Klein, the kitchen coordinator. The planning and kitchen preparation gives youngsters who will have a bar or bat mitzvah within the next two years an idea of what a reception is all about.

Spring Retreat for Young Families

The Beth Israel Spring Retreat for Young Families, May 25–27 at the Butzel Conference Center in Ortonville, Michigan is open to the general community. There is a charge. Activities including Shabbat programs, crafts, sports, family games, hiking, a camp-fire and more. The Butzel Conference Center offers comfortable resort-like facilities overlooking a private lake in a beautiful countryside setting. It is located on the grounds of Tamarack Camps, and is staffed by experienced counselors from their summer or other family camp programs.

Tot Shabbat

Tot Shabbats on Saturday April 14 and April 28 at 11 a.m.–noon

These gatherings are intended for three to six year olds and their parents and include songs, stories, prayers, and puppets. On Saturday, April 14 the Tot Shabbat is run by Peretz Hirshbein and on Saturday, April 28 Jennifer Levine will lead Tot Shabbat. A special Kids' Kiddush just for the tots follows. There is no charge for this program.

Beth Israel Reads

In conjunction with the third annual Beth Israel Religious School Read-A-Thon, the BIRS Education Committee is premiering its first annual "Beth Israel Reads" with the Holocaust novel, *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* by John Boyne. The book may be purchased at the Beth Israel Religious School and Administrative offices. After Beth Israel's Yom HaShoah services on Sunday April 8 at 7:30 p.m., those who have read the book are invited to a general discussion at 8:15 p.m.

Israel Inspiration

This past February Rabbi Robert Levy led a group from Temple Beth Emeth to visit and hike in Israel and Jordan. Their trip included visits to Jerusalem, Eilat and Petra. This poem speaks to the group's day at Petra in Jordan.

Petra is an archeological site in Jordan, lying among the mountains in the great valley running from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Eilat. It is famous for having many stone structures carved out of the soft rock. The long-hidden site was revealed to the European world by a Swiss explorer in 1812. Its famous description "a rose-red city half as old as time" is the final line of a sonnet written in the 1840's by John William Burgon.

Petra, Jordan

By Rabbi Robert D. Levy

If Petra were not already a movie set it
should be.

A line of fake and elegant buildings
ending three miles down the
narrow sandy path at a restaurant.

Then a hike to the roof of the world.
I walk in the company of young men,
moving fast to keep up and hide my age.
At the very top, on an overhang
to everything, a man sells tea
with conversation.

Off to the right a shepherd and
small flock. Aaron's grave off to the left.
And blue sky, so blue.

Petra only appears historic.
In its day and today Petra requires
imagination.

Petra is less about the path and sand
than the walk.

Petra, Jordan

Auction items for you:

You still have time to bid on auction items remaining at the JCC. From light fixtures, photographs and vases to mirrors, sculptures and discounted admittance to local businesses – we have something that's meant for you. Please stop by the JCC lobby to submit your bid(s) and support the JCC in building a new playground.

Haftorah for Parashat Metzora

Rabbi Robert Dobrusin, special to the WJN

This article is one in a series on the Haftarah, the reading from the prophets during the Shabbat morning service. Each month, Rabbi Dobrusin comments on one of the traditional Haftarah readings for that month.

The Torah reading from Parashat Metzora, in the book of Leviticus, is not the most popular reading of the year. It focuses in great depth on the Torah's description of the steps to be taken when an individual is suffering from leprosy or similar diseases. The "treatment methods" are clearly archaic and reflect the belief that all such diseases are sent directly from God and are treated only with religious ritual and prayer.

While spiritual efforts to help us or help others recover from illness are certainly part of Jewish tradition and, some argue, can be of great value in health care, clearly we do not benefit from turning only to spiritual means for healing.

Much of the rabbinic tradition focused on using these Torah chapters to impress upon us the importance of certain moral traditions in order to avoid disease. Among these are avoiding gossip, *lashon hara*, which both because of both a play on the Hebrew word for leprosy and the corroborating story of Miriam's bout with the disease, was seen to be the cause for contacting leprosy.

Avoiding gossip and following other moral guidelines are, of course, critical and our lives are improved by living in a more ethically based society. But, for most, the linkage of disease to such actions is, at best, misguided and, at worst, an encouragement to sit in judgment of those who are stricken.

In the haftarah reading for Parashat Metzora, taken from the book of Second Kings, we read the story of four lepers who are sitting outside of the gates of the city. It is presumed that in addition to being ostracized to keep their disease from spreading, they were ostracized by a tradition that assigned a moral value to their contacting the ailment. It is therefore critical that in this story, these four men become the heroes by using the fact that they were outside of their own city to infiltrate the camp of the Aramean enemy and come back with critical information that led to their defeat.

There is a lesson to be heard in this story. While our society has hopefully moved far beyond attributing all disease to moral lapses, we do still tend to judge those who afflicted with illnesses of one kind or another or with physical or emotional challenges to be less valued than others in our society. We tend to leave these individuals outside of the gates either physically or metaphorically and assume that they can not be the ones who will lead us or provide for our society that which we vitally need.

The lesson of the haftarah for our day is that ostracizing those who suffer from an illness or casting aspersions on their worth as a human being only robs us of the opportunity to learn from and benefit from what each individual can contribute to society.

We can scoff at the Torah's archaic response to those with disease. But, we have to ask ourselves how much we have learned and how far we have come from the days when those afflicted with illnesses were looked down upon and treated as less than human. ■

Experiencing Passover today

Rabbi Aharon Goldstein, special to the WJN

The Seder is intended to be a personal experience. It should not, however, be a private one.

Every person should look upon the exodus as an event of the present, not of the past.

He should feel that he is leaving his personal Egypt, i.e., going beyond all the boundaries and limitations that confine his essential Godly nature.

And yet, the Torah teaches us that this realization should be experienced communally.

The Paschal sacrifice, it commands, should be offered "for your families." For however personal our Passover experience is, we should share and celebrate it together with our families—immediate and extended. Each person extends a hand to another, helping him or her understand and taste Redemption.

The Haggadah points to this concept in its discussion of the four sons. It is not only the wise who are gathered at the Seder table, but also the simple, those who identify Jewishly and appreciate observance, but have difficulty defining and verbalizing their identification. And they are joined by those who do not know how to ask—those who know that they are Jewish, but know little more than that, who do not know where to begin looking to find out more about their faith.

And together with them comes the wicked—Jews who rebel and challenge observance, but at the same time, want to share in the seder experience. Whatever their personal or ideological peeves with Jewish practice, they feel that on Passover night, they belong at a seder.

And these sons celebrate the seder together. They do not make four separate Sedarim; they come together at the same table. For they are all part of the same people, and the experience of redemption that each is seeking is intertwined with that of the other.

The haggadah points to this concept in its words: echad chacham, echad rasha.... "One is wise, one is wicked,..." The essential oneness that permeates the Jewish people and the mystic oneness of God that pervades all existence is reflected in all four sons.

The order in which the four sons are mentioned also teaches us an important lesson:

The wicked son comes right after the wise son. This points to the wicked son's inner potential. The only thing separating him from the wise son is his desire, and that can be changed. And that is another reason why they are sitting together, so that they can share and communicate and allow the fundamental Jewish desire that they possess in their hearts to come to the surface.

When these four sons get together, they can bring a fifth son to the seder table—a son or a daughter who is Jewish but for some reason was not planning to come to a seder table. When the haggadah was written, this type of son did not exist. Now unfortunately he is a very prevalent type of person within the Jewish community.

However apathetic to his or her Jewish roots this fifth son appears, within his heart, there is also a desire to become part of the Jewish experience. And when all four sons come together on Passover, the dynamic synergy that results will be powerful enough to inspire all the fifth sons to claim their place at the Seder table. ■

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New history course explores the past to find lessons to guide the future

Rabbi Aharon Goldstein, special to the WJN

A look to the past, a reflection on the future.

The Rohr Jewish Learning Institute is set to launch a challenging new history course at over 200 affiliates across the globe. But unlike traditional history courses where students focus on dates, names, and events, "Flashbacks in Jewish History" looks beneath the surface at what history means to the Jews as a people.

"Jews have had to grapple with the challenge of maintaining their identity in environments that were foreign and often hostile," explains Rabbi Aharon Goldstein. "By probing the wonder of Jewish survival, we hope our students will be led to think critically about their own strategies for interacting successfully with the greater culture." "Flashbacks in Jewish History" does not attempt to be comprehensive in its coverage

Rabbi Aharon Goldstein

of any era; rather, it tries to spark curiosity and to engage students emotionally. "Flashbacks in Jewish History" appeals to the intellect by introducing the impassioned debate of historians over what really happened, at times even casting students directly into the historian's role as they are asked to interpret primary texts. The course touches the heart, as students are shown that history is about people just like them, with hopes, dreams, and challenges.

"We live in an increasingly global community, where people with differing views are forced to interact more than at any other time in human history," says local JLI coordinator Dr. Paul Shapiro. "So I'm excited to learn how Jews have survived history with their culture and traditions intact."

As cries of "jihad" resound through the Middle East today, one could be reminded of the radical Almohads sweeping through Spain, leaving destruction in their wake. On encountering religious and cultural intolerance in many parts of the world today, we not infrequently experience déjà vu, an uncanny feeling that we have lived through all of this before. "Flashbacks in Jewish History" shows students how we can learn from the past to better guide and direct our future.

This new course will be offered at the Jewish Community Center of Washtenaw County for six Mondays, starting Monday, April 30. The course costs $60, which includes a student textbook. "We are so sure that you will enjoy it" say the organizers, "that we invite anyone interested to attend the first lesson free, with no obligation."

What can students gain by taking this course? A chance to discover where they came from and how they survived countless persecutions to get here. A chance to experience the wonder of Jewish survival and reflect back on the past. A chance to face the future with renewed hope and inspiration. And an opportunity to learn the secrets that will help make that future brighter and more meaningful.

About the JLI

The Jewish Learning Institute (JLI) is the adult education arm of Chabad-Lubavitch. JLI's classes and programs, now offered in over 250 locations in 200 cities nationwide, as well as international locations (including Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Finland, Holland, South Africa, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Venezuela), have been attended by nearly 40,000 people since JLI's creation in 1998. Many others participate virtually through online message boards and other internet-based channels.

Every course offered by the JLI is synchronized so that lessons are offered concurrently in all locations. This not only has helped to create a true global learning community; it is a unique feature that sets JLI apart from other such programs. Visit www.myjli.com for up-to-the-minute information about "Flashbacks in Jewish History."

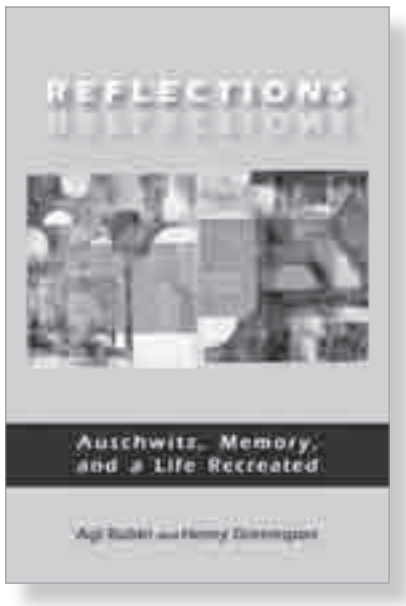
JLI courses are presented in Ann Arbor under the auspices of Ann Arbor Chabad House. For more information, call 995-3276 ■

Course overview

This course covers how Jews far-flung from their lands survived cultural onslaught and the threat of assimilation. New perspectives are presented for facing the modern challenges of scientific inquiry, moral relativism, Western hedonism, and religious warfare. By probing the miracle of Jewish survival, participants will find new ways to live meaningfully as a Jew in the 21st century and beyond.

- Lesson 1: Cultures in Collision: Israel vs. Greece and Rome
- Lesson 2: Far from the Place That We Call Home: Jewish Exile and Dispersal in the middle East
- Lesson 3: All that Glitters: The Golden Age in Moslem Spain Prevailing Despite Hate and Oppression
- Lesson 4: Rivers of Blood: Antisemitism in medieval Christian Europe
- Lesson 5: In the Shadow of the Inquisition: The Downfall of Spanish Jewry
- Lesson 6: Rising from the Ashes: The Revival of European Jewry

Twenty-five years in the writing



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—Sidney Bolkosky, Voice/Vision Holocaust Oral History Archive Director

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Picture of my past

Sandor Slomovits, staff writer

Note: This article is in honor of Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, commemorated on April 15.

It was the day before my parents' 50th wedding anniversary. My brother and I were visiting them. We've known since we were 16, when our mother let slip one day that she was our father's second wife, that our father had lost his first wife and three young children in Auschwitz. Long before that revelation, we'd heard about our father's other relatives who were killed in Auschwitz. Our father occasionally told us stories of these people. The stories often ended with, "They were taken to Auschwitz." I can't recall a time when I felt a need for further explanations. Auschwitz was a part of our family history that I inhaled as naturally as many other far less remarkable facts. It seemed as if it was always there—like air—not really hidden, but usually invisible.

Though our father sometimes spoke of his parents, brother, and sisters who perished in Auschwitz, he never mentioned his first wife and children. And while there were pictures of his other relatives in our family photo albums, we never saw any pictures of his wife and children. Our mother did tell us once, that shortly after she and our father married, she'd found a photo of them in his wallet, had asked him about it and had not seen it since.

It wasn't until I was in my late forties that I finally braved talking with my father about his first family. He did not seem surprised then that I knew about his wife and children. I asked for stories about them, asked him to describe what they looked like. And he did. Briefly, haltingly, and with so much pain and sadness on his face that, feeling guilty about opening old wounds, I always dropped the topic after a few minutes. Only to find myself, days, weeks or months later, feeling compelled to bring it up again. But, I never asked about the picture of his first family.

Finally, on this golden anniversary visit, I got my father alone and asked him if he had a picture of his first wife and children. (Not wanting to create problems between my parents, I didn't tell him that I already knew of its existence from my mother.) My father made a grimace, looked away, and said, "No." I wanted to spare him the pain, but my longing to see these people had become so strong that I persisted.

"Are you sure you don't have any pictures of them? Weren't there any left when you returned from the Camps?"

Irritated, he snapped back, "You don't understand. There was nothing left in my house. They were using it as a stable."

In my best investigative reporter/prosecuting attorney manner I continued. "But you have pictures of your parents and brother and sisters."

He went on the defensive, "I have no idea where I got those from. Maybe from one of my sisters who wasn't taken to the Camps."

I was about to give up, but my mother, overhearing our conversation from the kitchen, called out now. "Herman, you used to carry one in your wallet. I saw it. It was of your wife and two of the children."

Embarrassed, either at being caught in a lie, or at having his fading memory pointed out to him, my father said slowly, "You're right, there was one picture." Then he quickly added, "But the children were not in it."

My mother, with 50 years of practice in standing up to him, was tenacious. "No, Herman. Two of the children are in the picture. I remember the little girl." My father snorted in disgust and left the room.

My mother began setting the table for supper. I joined her and we worked silently. I could hear my father rummaging in his study. A few minutes later he was back, carrying a small black prayer book. Holding it open to the middle with one hand, he was fingering a small photo with the other. Softly, in a tone of wonder, he said to my mother, "You are right, Blanka, the children are here."

I reached for the photo but he stopped me and said, pointing to the page in the book opposite where the picture had been secreted all these

Herman Slomovits, his first wife, Etta, daughter Zelda, and son Erno.

years, "See, this is where I recorded your birth dates." I looked where he was pointing and there, in my father's beautiful Hebrew printing, was the abbreviated heading "Boruch Hashem, Blessed is the Lord." Below that, my brother's and my Hebrew names, the date of our birth according to the Jewish calendar and the words, "bonai hajkirim," my dear children.

I stared silently at the writing and the picture. I stood frozen, numb. A myriad of conflicting emotions stormed through me. Many of them I only recognized and sorted out weeks and months later.

Resentment and jealousy—Lord help me—because I didn't have the page to myself; I need share it, of course with my brother, and also with these other children. I'd always only thought of them as my father's first children. But I now realized—they are also my half brothers and sister.

Rage. My fists clenched, my jaw clamped. What kind of monsters could order these people into gas chambers?

Pain. Like the agony of someone whose anesthesia has worn off after major surgery. For the briefest moment, before I am overwhelmed by the horror of it and need to push the emotions away, I truly feel my father's anguish. How he must have ached when he looked at this picture. What was it like to lose your wife and three children like that?

Next comes grief. For the first time in my life I began to consciously grieve for my dead brothers and sister and for the woman who might have been my mother.

Hard on the heels of the grief came guilt—recognition of my father's and my own. I understood that when he insisted on showing me what he had written in his prayer book before allowing me to see the picture, my father was perhaps trying to reassure me that he loved me as much as his other children. In my father's prayer book, and maybe in his silent prayers, all his children were together. Did he ever feel guilty that he was betraying their memories by loving us?

And there were my feelings of guilt, of shame; the by now familiar guilt and shame of the child of a survivor of the Holocaust; shame that I might dare feel resentment and jealousy in the face of the horrific losses my father has endured; guilt, that my very existence mocks those losses. After all, I might not have even been born were it not for these people dying.

Finally, through the din of all these emotions, I recognized gratitude. My father was giving me a priceless gift. He was telling me, in the only way in which he was capable, that I have been dear to him; that he has loved me, loved us, though he needed to keep his love secret, as he kept secret his love and grief for his first family. "Bonai hajkirim," my dear children. He was letting me know that, contrary to the way I've sometimes felt, I've not been merely a replacement, a sad, inadequate substitute, for all he has lost.

Finally I admitted to myself that perhaps the reason I hadn't dared ask my father about his first family was not only to spare him pain but because it was too painful for me—too painful to contemplate that my mother and brother and I might not be first in his affections. I saw how we conspired, colluded together to keep these secrets. Perhaps I, like my father, also needed to pretend all these years that these people have disappeared from our lives.

And for the first time in my adult life I began to think of him not as my hand-me-down father—the father who first belonged to these other three children—but as my own father; worn, torn, patched and faded by all he experienced before I was born, but still shielding me, protecting me, as he was unable to shield and protect his first children.

An absurd memory flashed in my mind. When my brother and I were in our early teens, we loved to play Monopoly with our father. It was the one game that he ever played with us, and one of the very few leisure activities in which we could engage him. For several years we played it frequently, sometimes with my mother joining us, but often just the three of us. We all took a childlike delight in accumulating the piles of fake money and the various properties. Perhaps my brother and I reveled in having him all to ourselves at those times—being able to monopolize him, not having to engage in the felt, but as yet unknown, unfair competition with our dead brothers and sister.

During these games my father was always very lighthearted, not somber or serious, not critical and judgmental, the way he seemed to be at most other times. Maybe he could relax with this make-believe wealth, this fantasy city. Maybe it reminded him of his happy life with his first family. Or maybe it allowed him to briefly forget.

I stared at the picture between the pages of the book my father was holding. I could not look at my father. Finally, I reached out and picked up the picture. I held it gingerly, as though it was a rare archeological artifact.

Which it is. Taken sometime in the mid-1930s, it is a sepia-toned, informal, outdoor portrait of my father's first wife, Etta, his oldest son, Ernö, and his daughter, Zelda. Etta, smiling faintly, clearly pregnant with their third child Gyuri, is sitting on a simple wooden chair, her hands folded in her lap, wearing the traditional wig of orthodox Jewish women. Zelda, blonde and plump, about four years old, wearing a simple, short white dress and white knee socks, is standing to her left, looking suspiciously into the camera. Ernö, two years older, is standing next to his sister, wearing a dark cap, white sailor outfit with short pants, also with white knee socks, and holds a small ball in front of him.

I pulled the picture close. I tried to see if there is a resemblance between my half brother and sister and my brother and me but I was too stunned, numbed to be able to make that judgment. To this day I can't tell. However, I noticed with some amazement the strong resemblance between my father's first wife and my own mother.

I noticed something else. Three sides of the photo are professionally trimmed, but the fourth, the side where Ernö stands, is uneven and rough. Suddenly, I recalled another photo, one that I have seen before, in one of our family albums. It is of my father, seated in a chair identical to Etta's. I realized with a start—this was a family portrait that had been cut in half. I was holding the picture of the family that was torn away, destroyed in Auschwitz. My father had been hiding them ever since, keeping them safe, as he was not able to then.

I asked my father, "Why was this picture cut?" I reminded him of the other half. Did he cut it so he could fit this half into his wallet? Or had someone else cut it?

My father looked at me incredulously, "This was more than 50 years ago. Do you think I remember?"

Was it my father who cut this photo? Was it he who literally cut himself out of the picture, cut himself off from his first wife and children, as he was cut off from them by the Nazis? Was it he who removed himself from them, disappeared from the picture, as in a way he also has from us, his second family?

In the next few days, I searched meticulously through all my parents' photo albums. I could not find the other half of the picture anywhere. I began to question whether I ever did see it.

But I knew I had. It was the only picture of my father from that period of his life. Did he hide that picture too? Did he throw it away? Has it vanished as completely as the man he was then?

More than a year went by before the other half of the photo turned up. I moved a bookshelf my mother wanted to relocate, and the picture, along with a few inconsequential scraps of paper, was underneath it. Neither of my parents had any idea how it got there. I put the jagged edges of the two pictures side by side. They fit perfectly. Together, they formed a picture of my past; a past I never saw, yet a past I can never forget. ■

This is Sunday School? Reconstructionist Havurah's Geoffrey Berdy says yes!

Jonathan Cohn, special to the WJN

Everybody knows that religious school is boring—everybody, that is, except Geoffrey Berdy.

It is an ordinary Sunday morning in early January. And Berdy, who runs the local Reconstructionist *Beit Siefer* (school), has a full lesson planned for his students. There will be singing, introduction to a Jewish holiday, plus some instruction in Hebrew—a few words for the youngest ones, more sophisticated material for their older ones.

But before Berdy gets to that traditional fare, he has something else in mind.

It's time for "Torah yoga."

Standing at the front of the class, Berdy turns his shoulders and feet inward, as if he were a set of the sacred scrolls. He beckons the students to do the same and they oblige, standing up from the rug where they've been sitting and—one by one—assuming the same position. "Breathe in, nice and easy, and now breathe out," Berdy says, as the kids inhale and exhale as one. Then, following Berdy's lead, they unfurl themselves with Zen-like fluidity until they are all standing feet apart, hands high in the air.

It's not the first time Berdy has started off a class with yoga. He figures it's a good way to relax the kids and put them in the mood for learning, which is no small feat given their ages. (Some are just five years old.) But this week, yoga is also part of the official curriculum. After the kids are done pretending to be Torah scrolls, Berdy teaches them what yoga masters call the "tree position." And that's appropriate, he says, since the holiday of Tu B'Shvat—Judaism's celebration of trees—is coming up soon.

A discussion of trees follows. When Berdy asks the kids why trees are important, hands shoot up. "They give us oxygen," says one student. "They give us shade," says another. Then a third student volunteers, "they have roots, like families." Bingo—that's exactly where Berdy wanted this discussion to go. Soon Berdy is recounting a Talmudic fable about an elderly man who plants a seedling, knowing that it won't blossom into a tree until long after he's died. But the man does it anyway, Berdy explains, because his ancestors have done it for him—and this is a way of passing on tradition and strengthening the community over time.

It's not the most conventional way to teach children about Judaism. But, then, Berdy doesn't want to be conventional—and neither do the people who hired him.

When the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Havurah—the local Reconstructionist congregation—set out to upgrade their religious school a year ago, they sought a director who would create a program consistent with Reconstructionism's broader philosophy. They wanted a director who would take the Jewish faith seriously, but teach about it in a fun, innovative way—somebody who would honor tradition even as he modernized it. In Geoff Berdy, they seem to have found just such a person.

❖ ❖ ❖

Now 35 years old, Berdy has strong local ties: He was born at Detroit's Sinai Hospital and spent much of his childhood in the area. He also has an undergraduate degree from Michigan State University, a fact he hopes all of his friends in Ann Arbor won't hold against him. But Berdy's eclectic background also includes time abroad—some of it in Great Britain and some of it on a kibbutz in Israel. And he credits that experience with broadening his horizons: Among his best friends during his grade school years in London was a fellow student at who happened to be Palestinian. Together they founded a group called M.E.M.O.: "Middle Eastern Minorities Organization," in which they wrote letters to Middle East leaders urging them to initiate dialogue.

Although Berdy likes to think of himself as something of a "religious rebel," he grew up in the Orthodox tradition and always had a strong sense of Jewish identity. He was one of the only Jewish students at that London school. (He ended up playing Joseph in the nativity play.) Later on, the years Berdy spent in Yeshiva turned him on to Jewish education—particularly the concept of *lishmah*, or learning Torah for its own sake. As an undergraduate at MSU, he helped start a Jewish Student Union, in response to a planned visit by Louis Farrakhan. He would go on to spend his last undergraduate semester at Hebrew College, in Newton, Massachusetts.

For many years, Berdy says, his family and friends figured he was destined to become a rabbi. And Berdy admits he thought about it. But he eventually chose a different academic path: pursing a master's in theology at Harvard's Divinity School, where—in addition to studying under scholars like Cornel West and Elie Wiesel—he delved deeply into issues surrounding the philosophy of education.

It was around this time, he says, that he began to think a lot about the disconnect he perceived between contemporary Judaism and its past. Concepts like *lishmah* were fading from the Jewish community's collective consciousness, he says, with only the orthodox keeping them alive. And the practice of the faith was increasingly top-down, with rabbis increasingly adopting the exalted position of priests—preaching down to their congregations rather than engaging with them. "Rabbis came to prominence during the Second Temple period, probably as a reaction to the priests, who had been dominant," Berdy explains. "Rabbis couldn't absolve sins—they were just spiritual teachers, bringing people closer to God by their own knowledge and powers of persuasion."

According to Berdy, this relatively democratic model of faith, in which anybody with the right training could lead a congregation, befit a religion that was dispersed and constantly on the run. (Berdy notes that, in this respect, Judaism's evolution closely resembled the evolution of African-American churches, where anybody who learned scripture could lead a congregation.) Today, he says, that's changing: "With the institutionalization of religion, the Jewish community has given over too much of the responsibility of Jewish learning to rabbis. Part of my personal mission is to foster the notion that we can all be Jewish teachers and lovers of Jewish learning, even with a limited background."

During his years at Harvard, Berdy says, he also became fascinated with the relationship between the Jewish faith and technology. Jews "really were the first virtual community," Berdy says. And he's only half-joking: After all, for hundreds of years Jews were scattered about the world, united only by a common text—one that passed from tablet to parchment and then to book. "People in Spain were writing to Maimonides in Egypt," Berdy notes. "Communities were connected by tradition, across national boundaries, and not through hierarchy the way, for example, the Catholic Church was."

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All of that is fine and well. But what do all these heady concepts have to do with Sunday School?

Quite a lot, it turns out. While in Boston, Berdy had started working at a local Jewish school. Later, after marrying a woman he'd first met at Michigan State, he returned to the Detroit area—and became program director at Ann Arbor's Beth Israel congregation. "It was a wonderful start," Berdy says. "I liked the congregation very much. It's a special place and it gave me an introduction to Ann Arbor."

In 2006, Berdy got an offer to direct education and outreach for the Toledo Board of Jewish Education, a job he still holds today. It's a job that requires Berdy to "wear many hats":

Geoffrey Berdy leads a group in song at the Reconstructionist Havurah Retreat

Among other things, he serves as vice president for Judaic studies at the David S. Stone Hebrew Academy, which is Toledo's Jewish day school. But even with the multiple jobs—not to mention a one-year-old son, Lev—Berdy had time for one more commitment.

That's where Ann Arbor's Reconstructionist Havurah comes into the story. It had been offering religious classes for some ten years or so – first in the homes of families, later at the Jewish Community Center of Washtenaw County. But with the congregation growing, its board decided it was time to hire a fully credentialed teacher. It wanted somebody with extensive experience in Jewish education but also somebody comfortable with their approach to faith: "Our curriculum comes out of the Reconstructionist approach to Judaism," says Deborah Field, who is head of the Havurah's education committee. "We are supposed to learn about the tradition, study it in its historical context, and then make decisions as a community and as individuals about how we relate to that tradition – which aspects we adopt, which we adapt, which we forgo, and so on."

Those ideas led the Havurah to Berdy, whose classroom style closely matches that philosophy. He asks questions more than he answers them; he leads discussions rather than giving lectures. Berdy teaches about the Talmud and the Torah, but he's constantly encouraging the children develop their own interpretations of the text. He explains how different Jewish cultures from around the world celebrate holidays, careful never to suggest one method is better than the other.

That's asking a lot of initiative and self-direction out of some very young children. But Berdy—who is a fan of Montessori-style education—says the "kids get it right away." They tune out when a teacher hands down doctrine. But when a teacher makes them think for themselves, by participating and asking questions, they engage—and start to love learning for its own sake, which is the very definition of lishmah. "In many cases the analytical thinking embedded in Jewish learning has been sucked out," Berdy says. "That's the heart of the Jewish tradition. We want to create critical thinkers right off the bat."

And once the students get used to this style of learning, Berdy argues, they can really run with it. Older children, he says, can use the same skills to direct their study of the Torah as they prepare for bar and bat mitzvah, picking and choosing the parts of the text that interest them the most. "We don't want kids having cookie-cutter bar mitzvahs," Berdy says. "We want them to have their own interests and a strong sense of their own identity." This style of education inevitably tolerates—indeed, it embraces—a large diversity of opinion when it comes to fundamental matters of faith and spirituality. But that, says Berdy, is entirely consistent with Reconstructionism and, more generally, Judaism's tradition of spirited debate over the meaning of text.

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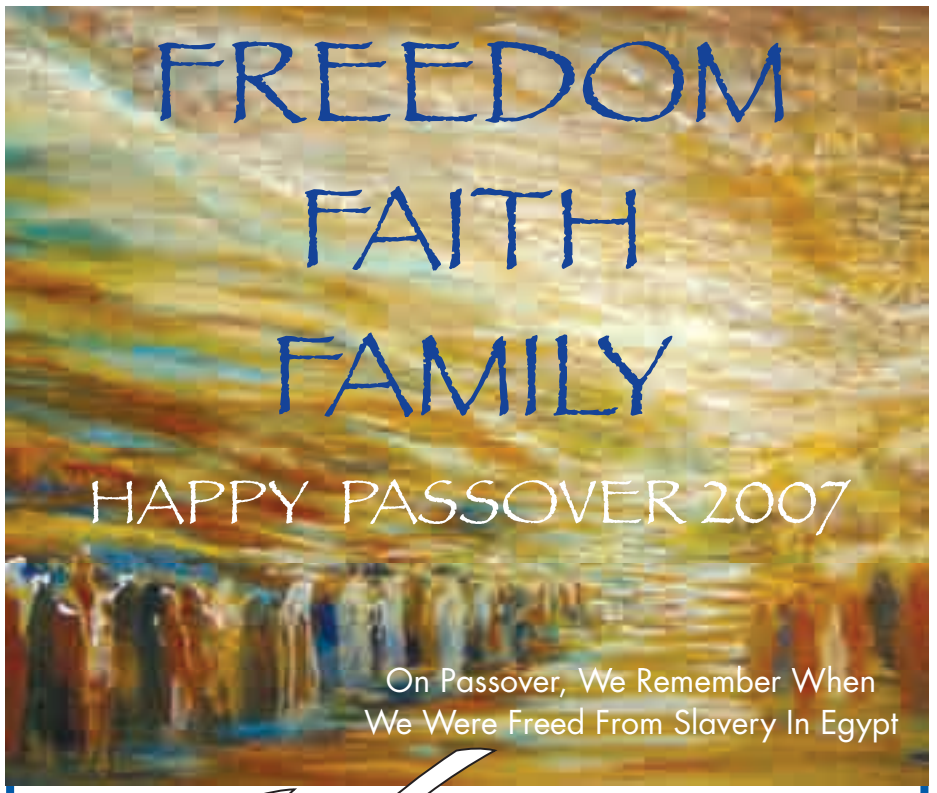
One other focus of Berdy's classroom is teaching about the importance of serving others in the community, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. In one of this year's earliest sessions, Berdy had all the students make boxes for Tzedakah out of construction paper. The boxes now reside in the kids' homes; every week, they collect donations that they bring to the school on Sunday.

I know from personal experience—my son is a student in the class—that the kids see the exercise as both exciting and meaningful. Filling the box is a game, yet they understand why they are collecting the money and what it will eventually mean to the people who benefit from it. But then, that's exactly the way Berdy and the Reconstructionist Havurah like it. They want learning about Judaism to be both fun and meaningful. ■

Jonathan Cohn, a senior editor of the New Republic *and the author of* Sick: The untold story of America's health care crisis--and the people who pay the price, *is based in Ann Arbor.*



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Second year at JCC Camp Keshet

Peretz Hirshbein, special to the WJN

For the second summer in a row, the Jewish Community Center of Washtenaw County's preschool program will be transformed into Camp Keshet. For preschool-aged children, Camp Keshet is organized around two-week long theme sessions, taking full advantage of the ECC's spacious outdoor facilities. Each day children will participate in specialized art, nature, sports and music activities that highlight that session's topic. Camp Keshet will build on last year's successful program by introducing new themes. This summer's themes focus heavily on the natural world, including Garden Days, Tikkun Olam (repairing the world), Down on the Farm, and Things that Go.

Teacher Michelle Paris with her group during sports.

During the Garden Days theme, campers will learn how to sow, nurture and harvest fruits, vegetables and flowers as they work each day in the ECC's garden plot. Children will not only sow and care for new plantings, they will also harvest vegetation planted previously in the spring.

The theme for the second session will be *Tikkun Olam* (repairing the world). Campers will learn practical lessons in recycling, reusing and reducing, highlighted by a trip to Ann Arbor's Materials Recovery Facility. At this facility, campers will get a first-hand look at what happens to the recyclables that their parents send there each week.

Camper Rebecca Cooke at the pool.

The third session's theme is Down on the Farm and will focus on the mitzvah of *Tza'ar Ba'ali Chayim* (taking care of animals). Campers will learn about what life is like on a farm, with a field trip to visit real farm animals.

The summer will conclude with a more mechanically-oriented topic, Things That Go. Campers will take apart and (try to) put together mechanical equipment, as well as explore different modes of transportation, all in an effort to discover how things go!

At Camp Keshet, small groups of campers, with two of the Early Childhood Center's highly qualified teachers acting as counselors, participate in art, science and nature and sports activities. The entire camp joins together for music each day, and on Tuesdays and Thursdays, take a trip, via school bus, to Buhr pool, where Camp Keshet has its own private time slot at the tot swimming pool. The entire camp also participates in field trips and special visitors that provide the centerpiece of each theme.

For more information on Camp Keshet, contact the JCC Early Childhood Office at 971-0990.

Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Havurah pre-K event

Geoff Berdy, special to the WJN

The Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Havurah invites families of pre-kindergarteners, tots and toddlers to join at the Jewish Community Center of Washtenaw County for a fun-filled morning of songs, stories, crafts and snacks and a new feature: bagels and coffee for adults. The event will take place on Sunday, April 22 from 10–11:30 a.m.

This is an opportunity to engage in some informal Jewish education with your child and the staff of the Havurah's Beit Sefer (religious school).

RSVP to Geoff Berdy at 649-8723 or gberdy1@yahoo.com. This event is free and open to everyone, so invite a friend to join you. ■

Federation launches the PJ Library
Giving Jewish books to families with young children

Eileen Freed, special to the WJN

Cuddling up and reading our children a good book before bed—this special time creates a memorable bond and lifelong love of books.

Now a new Jewish Federation of Washtenaw County program is nurturing a love of Jewish books. Thanks to the generous support of an anonymous philanthropist, the Jewish Federation is partnering with the Harold Grinspoon Foundation to launch the PJ Library.

Conceived as a giving library, the PJ Library (*PJ* as in pajamas) provides young families with a treasury of Jewish books and CDs through monthly mailings. The program is free for children ages six months to five years old and is available to the first 250 children to register.

"The beauty of this program is that it gives parents an opportunity to take a universal experience—reading to children at night—and infuse it with Jewish meaning," said Jeff Levin, executive director of the Jewish Federation. "The books are modern and high quality. And the guides make it easy for parents of any background to discuss the books with their kids."

"The PJ Library Project shows that our community believes in the power of family," said Harlene Appelman, executive director of the Covenant Foundation and nationally renowned Jewish educator. "Developing a language of intimacy around wonderful stories gives kids hope and security and gives parents or other caring adults an opportunity to get a glimpse into children's most profound thoughts. This opportunity is truly a 'no strings' gift to the community and an investment in the future."

Temple Beth Emeth piloted PJ Library this fall. Through the generosity of Paul and Judy Freedman, the program is available to participants in TBE's Tot Shabbat program. Judy, a librarian at TBE, discovered the program at an international meeting of the Association of Jewish Libraries and was impressed with its potential. "My husband and I were inspired by PJ Library and thought it would be a great gift for our families. People are thrilled with the program."

Established in 2005 by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation of Western Massachusetts, the PJ Library sends a high-quality book or music CD each month to participants who enroll. Each monthly package includes a helpful guide for parents and occasionally a parenting book as an added bonus. Early childhood experts have selected all available books and CDs to cover a wide range of topics appropriate for ages six months to five years. Themes include Jewish holidays, folktales and Jewish family life. Participating families will enjoy family programs related to the books throughout the year.

Introductory materials will be mailed to all Jewish families in the area in early April. Current funding limits require that participation be limited to the first 250 respondents. All others will be placed on a waiting list. For more information or to register, visit www.jewishannarbor.org/pjlibrary or contact Eileen Freed, at the Federation, at 677-0100 or eileenfreed@jewishannarbor.org. ■

Sample of books and music available through the PJ Library

Books

The Opposites of My Jewish Year *by L.N. Dion*
Let's Nosh *by Amy Wilson Sanger*
Let's Visit Israel *by Judye Groner*
The Peace Book *by Todd Parr*
Happy Birthday World *by Latifa Berry Kropf*
Joseph Had a Little Overcoat *by Simms Taback*
To Everything *by Bob Barner*
Something from Nothing *by Phoebe Gilman*
It Could Always Be Worse *by Phoebe Gilman*
Dinosaur on Passover *by Diane Levin Rauchwerger*
Noah's Bed *by Lis and Jim Coplestone*
Chicken Soup by Heart *by Esther Hershenhorn*
The Matzo Ball Boy *by Lisa Shulman*
Why Noah Chose the Dove *by I.B. Singer*
The Keeping Quilt *By Patricia Polacco*
A Sack Full of Feathers *by Debby Waldman*

Music

ShirLaLa Chanukah *by Shira Klein*
Everybody's Got a Little Music *by Rabbi Joe Black*
My Newish Jewish Discovery *by Craig Taubman*

Parenting Resources

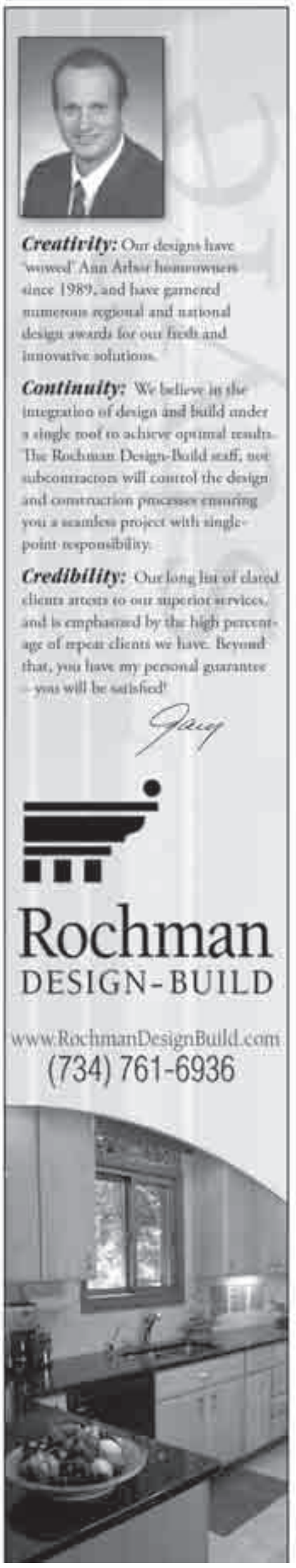
The Blessing of a Skinned Knee *by Dr. Wendy Mogel*

ECC and HDS hold spring Literacy Night

Peretz Hirshbein, special to the WJN

Spring is in the air, which means that it is time for the Jewish Community Center of Washtenaw County Early Childhood Center and the Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor's spring Literacy Night. The event, designed for children from preschool through second grade will be held at the JCC on Thursday evening April 26, at 6 p.m. Literacy Night features a series of theme-based activities for children and parents to engage in together. These activities are designed for multiple reading levels, from the pre-reader to the child reading with confidence.

The theme for this year's spring Literacy Night is fairy tales. Fairy tales are a rich source of literacy activities, from comparing different versions of stories, to creation of alternate endings, to composition of stories, and much more. The cost is $15 per family and dinner will be included in the program. Contact the ECC office at 971-0990 for details and to register.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Gan Yeladim Playgroup

Esther Goldstein, special to the WJN

Rabbi Alter Goldstein showing the children the Torah.

This coming September, the Gan Yeladim Playgroup will begin its fourth year of providing Jewish enrichment to preschoolers in the Ann Arbor area. Two separate classes will offer a stimulating Jewish environment for children on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings; Kvutza Aleph is for children age 20 months up through age five, and Kvutza Bet is for children age three through age five.

Both classes offer an age-appropriate curriculum designed to provide the children with a fun and enjoyable opportunity to socialize with each other, while concurrently teaching them about Jewish holidays and traditions. The day's schedule includes circle time highlighting *tzedaka* and *mitzvot*, arts and crafts relating to the upcoming holidays, song and story time, and an age-appropriate presentation of the weekly Torah portion. Children are also provided with a morning snack, as well as with lunch provided from home. Throughout the class, children are encouraged to work and play together in order to foster cooperative skills.

Recent examples of activities the children have engaged in include making felt shofars, learning about trees for Tu B'Shvat, baking challahs, assembling their own groggers, decorating a Kiddush cup, and other enjoyable and educational projects. While both classes are drop-off programs for the children, parents are invited to participate in several events throughout the year, such as a Chanukah party, a Purim celebration, and a parents' coffee get-together.

All of the playgroup instructors are experienced teachers and youth instructors who love children and care deeply about their emotional, cognitive, and Jewish growth. Enrollment is limited so that the ratio of children to teachers does not exceed four to one.

New for this year are additional enrichment classes which will be offered following the Playgroup. These enrichment classes, available by separate enrollment, will provide instruction in such fun and stimulating activities as yoga, ballet, art, and music.

Registration for the fall of 2007 is now open. For more information about the Gan Yeladim Playgroup and the new enrichment classes, contact Esther Goldstein at 995-3276 or esther@jewmich.com. ■

JCC Raanana Day Camp hires new assistant director

Rachel Rosenthal, special to the WJN

Nathan Bankirer

The Jewish Community Center of Washtenaw County has hired Nathan Bankirer as assistant camp director for Camp Raanana. Bankirer is currently a third year student at Eastern Michigan University and is pursuing a degree in special education with a focus on emotional impairment. Bankirer teaches at Beth Israel Religious School and will bring his knowledge of Judaic programming to Raanana.

His previous camp experience includes three summers working at Camp JCC in West Bloomfield. Last summer his position as program director required him to provide creative programming for 1,500 campers in addition to the many administrative tasks associated with a large camp. "One of the reasons that I'm excited to be working at Camp Raanana this summer, is the opportunity to get to know and interact with all of the campers personally. At a larger camp, the assistant director often finds himself acting in primarily an administrative capacity and doesn't spend much time with the campers. Raanana will be a refreshing change," states Bankirer.

Camp Director Craig Pollack states, "Nate has the skills and personality that I always look for in an assistant director. He knows what it takes to run a safe, fun camp and he can't wait to get to know the campers and parents. I think Nate will be a tremendous asset to our camp this summer."

Camp Raanana is for children entering kindergarten through 13 years of age and is one of the few Jewish camp programs in Washtenaw County. The camp is located on its own private beachfront site at Independence Lake in Webster Township and at the JCC in Ann Arbor. The facility includes a large covered pavilion, a swimming beach, ball fields, nature trails, offices and a variety of other features. In addition, boating, fishing, a "spray zone" and additional facilities are available throughout the park.

For more information, questions, or a registration form, call Craig Pollack at 971-0990 or e-mail craigpollack@jccfed.org.

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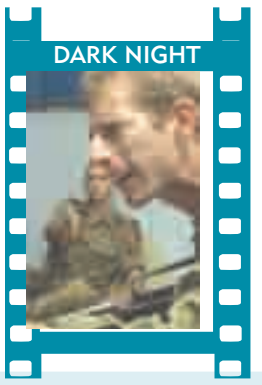

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"I really feel that Camp Raanana is a superior camp experience and that the director and the staff he chooses are outstanding counselors and role models," says parent Natalie Iglewicz.

Community volunteers seek out HDS

Dina Shtull, special to the WJN

Volunteerism is flourishing at the Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor, and it extends beyond the parent population. This year there have been four volunteers from the community who contacted the school to offer their help, and who have arranged to share their time and talents on a regular basis. The students have greatly benefited from their efforts. Two of the volunteers have previous connections with the school, and two of them are new to the Hebrew Day School community.

Josh Berman

Josh Berman volunteered in Aaron Kaufman's (Moreh Aharon's) first grade Hebrew class two afternoons a week during the first half of the year. Berman an alumnus of Hebrew Day School (class of 1995), graduated from the University of Michigan in 2006, where he majored in Political Science and Psychology. "HDS was the foundation for my Jewish education," he said. "While I didn't realize it at the time, this education was what set the tone for my intellectual success and connection with my Judaism."

Berman was inspired to volunteer at the HDS in order to have a chance to give back to the school. "I hope to be a positive influence in the lives of these children in the same way that many of my teachers were for me," says Berman. "Of course," he continues, "there is no better way to say thank you to my teachers than to give them a hand in the classroom." Berman also appreciates the great opportunity to keep up with his Hebrew.

Richard Frey

Richard Frey is a parent of two HDS alumni—Robert Frey (class of 1990), and Rachel Frey (class of 1993). Just retired from 30 years of teaching, Richard is volunteering twice a week with fifth grade students in math and language arts. He is also leading a lunch time *chug* (club) in chess. A U-M graduate (history, 1969), Richard has an M.A. in special education and a teaching certificate in physical education from Wayne State. "Why am I tutoring at HDS?" he asks aloud. "It's really about the children and the relationships. I miss the kid contact."

Richard Frey

Richard also points out that his own children got an excellent education at HDS, which provided a strong foundation for their subsequent academic success. Robert has finished his coursework at Columbia for his PhD in anthropology and public health. He is a teacher's assistant for two courses, and is studying for written and oral exams which he will take in the next six months. He is also finalizing and working on funding for his research proposal, which he plans to do in Israel. Rachel is in Madrid, on a Fulbright teaching fellowship. She is working in an elementary school in a bilingual program, with many of the children being immigrants to Spain. She is teaching English to the adult staff as well as to the children. "Incredible academic achievements," he added. "Life is short. There is much I hope to do in my retirement, but I want tutoring at HDS to be a fulfilling part of that future."

Frey has taught many subjects to children of all ages in a variety of educational and special need settings. He taught at U-M's Children's Psychiatric Hospital; York Woods Center, the children's division of Ypsilanti State Hospital; and most recently at the Beacon Day Treatment Center, a day treatment program for emotionally impaired children in Western Wayne County. He taught math, as well as chess and sudoku as part of the math curriculum.

Lea Grossman

Lea Grossman's love of Hebrew and Judaism brought her to Hebrew Day School. "I was born in Italy during the Shoah. By the age of fifteen I was uprooted many times to live in three countries with different languages and very different cultures. Today, as a result, I enjoy finding a common thread with virtually anyone. I enjoy belonging to and giving back to a stable community." Grossman refers to the children at Hebrew Day School as "my new *yeladim*" (children).

Grossman also volunteers at the U-M hospital. When she is not volunteering, she studies with Rabbi Dobrusin, exercises, sings with the Chaverim B'Shirim choir, cooks, gardens, plays tennis, works with clay, knits, crochets, paints, takes care of her two collies, and visits her grandchildren.

Jessica Taylor

Jessica Taylor volunteers as an instrumental music assistant one a week. Jessica helps instrumental music teacher, Sharon Homeyer, teach the fifth grade string program. Taylor has played violin for 16 years and has taught private violin lessons for seven years. She is the orchestra secretary for the Eastern Michigan University Orchestra, and an intern with the Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra.

Taylor will be graduating from EMU in April with a music major and business minor and plans to continue her studies to receive a master's in performing arts management. Taylor's primary responsibility at HDS is to work with string players who have had prior experience.

Crucial Volunteer Roles

In addition to these four volunteers, Rabbi Dobrusin from Beth Israel Congregation has been teaching Mishnah to the HDS fifth graders for many years.

"Parents also play a crucial volunteer role in our school," says Dina Shtull, Head of School. "If you walk into the Hebrew Day School on any day of the week, you will see parents helping in the classroom — leading an activity or preparing classroom materials. In fact, the school is unique in its Helping Hands Program, through which parents offer a variety of help as part of their commitment to the school."

"It's one of the foundations of our strong community," says Rachel Beaver, an HDS parent who matches volunteers with opportunities. "Parent volunteerism is part of the culture," says Jennifer Siegel, co-chair of PTO with Rachel Portnoy.

Hebrew Day School is grateful to parents, alumni, alumni parents, and members of the community for enriching the atmosphere at the school. "Children learn from our volunteers how important it is and how rewarding it can be to give back to the community," says Dina. "This lesson is part of our educational mission." To learn more volunteer opportunities at HDS, contact the school at 971-4633. ■

Passover Vacation Fun Days at the JCC

Craig Pollack, special to the WJN

The Jewish Community Center of Washtenaw County is offering five days of field trips and activities for JCC members ages 5-10, during the Ann Arbor and Hebrew Day School's Spring/Passover Break. Sign up for one or more days: 8 a.m.–4 p.m. The cost is $35/day (additional siblings $33). Late afternoon care is available from 4–6 p.m. for an additional $8/day. JCC membership is required.

A Passover lunch will be provided on April 5 and April 6—on those days, participants should not bring lunch from home. On April 11, April 12 and April 13, bring a dairy-only, nut-free lunch from home.

Spaces are limited and fill quickly. Look for a registration form in the mail. For further information contact Craig Pollack at 971-0990 or email craigpollack@jccfed.org.

The field trips for this year are:

- **Thursday, April 5 – U-M Natural History Museum**
  Take a high-velocity rocket trip to the Red Planet with the space explorers at the Natural History Museum. The museum's planetarium brings this mysterious planet to life and reveals its many fascinating features. Participants will have the opportunity to make an "Alka-Seltzer Rocket", Mars Landing Craft, or even a Mars Volcano.
- **Friday, April 6 – Domino Farms and Petting Zoo**
  Take a seat on a hay bail in the barn and watch the newest members of the barnyard strut their stuff on stage. Afterwards make friends with all the critters in the petting area. The trip will finish off with an old-fashioned hayride.
- **Wednesday, April 11 – Rainbow Creation Ceramics Studio**
  Kids will have the chance to choose an unfinished piece of pottery at this wonderful studio and let their artistic abilities loose. Participants can create their own design and paint and glaze their finished work of art. The pottery creations will be fired in a kiln and ready to take home the following week.
- **Thursday, April 12 – Carnival Time at the JCC**
  Kids will have the chance to play the games along the carnival boardwalk, win prizes galore, and compete in the outrageous relay races. Fun activities include rolling eggs, breaking the piñata, and shaving hair off of a balloon buddy.
- **Friday, April 13 – The Toledo Zoo**
  The Toledo Zoo is rated as one of America's best, and is home to 2,700 animals representing 490 different species. Twelve climate-controlled buildings make the zoo a unique, educational and fun place to visit anytime of the year.

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Shabbat Dinner at the ECC

Peretz Hirshbein, special to the WJN

The wall of tiles near the ECC's Monkey Room.

On Friday, April 20, at 6 p.m., the JCC Early Childhood Center's Giraffe Room will host a Shabbat Dinner. Children from the Giraffe Room will lead attendees in Shabbat blessings and songs. Families will have the opportunity to immortalize their children's time at the ECC by creating a ceramic tile to be added to the growing wall of tiles near the ECC's Monkey Room.

For this creative and popular fundraiser, families can decorate and glaze their tiles, which will then be sent out to Rainbow Creation for firing. Upon their return, they will be mounted on the JCC wall, adding to the tiles created by families last year.

The ECC would especially like to invite alumni of the program to attend and add a family tile to the wall. Families are welcome to come to only make tiles, or just for the dinner. The cost for the Shabbat Dinner is $10 for adults, $5 for children 2 years and up. Contact the Early Childhood Center office at 971-0990 for details and to register, or for alternate times to create tiles.

Lea Grossman helps HDS students Gal Hodish and Ayelet Pollock with their Hebrew reading

Jessica Taylor (center) with violin students Zoie Palan, Yael Silver and Molly Mintz.

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Yiddish Literature: Text & Translation
Readings of poetry and prose in both Yiddish and English.
Sunday, April 22, 6:00 p.m.
Rackham Amphitheatre, 915 E. Washington
All events are free and open to the public, please call 734-763-9047 for details.

FSU emigres revive Finnish Jewry

By Matt Siegel

HELSINKI (JTA) — Before Tamara Tuuminen left her native Moscow in 1978 with her husband, an ethnic Finn, she distanced herself from her Jewish roots. In the Soviet Union in the 1970s, "it was dangerous to be involved" in Jewish life, said Tuuminen, 51, a specialist in immunology and clinical microbiology who lives in Helsinki. "You could lose your right to study" at university. Only in Finland was she able to reconnect with her background, as have hundreds of recent Russian-born Jewish immigrants.

PHOTO BY MATT SIEGE

Helsinki's 100-year-old synagogue

Those immigrants have saved the community from extinction, say leaders of the small native Finnish Jewish community.

At the dawn of the 1990s, decades of immigration to Israel and intermarriage had decimated Finland's Jewish population. The country's third-largest Jewish community, in the city of Tampere, was forced to cease operations in 1981, and the country appeared to have lost the fight to maintain its dwindling Jewish population.

"The future wasn't looking very good because the number of community members had been declining all the time," recalls Dan Kantor, executive director of the Jewish Community of Helsinki, or JCH.

The JCH runs the city's 100-year-old synagogue, which houses Finland's only Jewish day school, and operates the only kosher deli in Finland.

When the Soviet Union collapsed and Jewish emigration began in earnest in the early '90s, most Jews who left went to Israel, the United States or Germany. But a few hundred families went to Finland, the USSR's closest capitalist neighbor.

It seems an inversion of the now common story of the revitalization of Jewish communities in the FSU: These Jews helped speed the revival of what was once a small but strong Diaspora community with close historical ties to Russia. "Today we have about 1,200 members; in the 1980s we had about 800 members," Kantor said. "And if you look at the background of the schoolchildren," some 75 percent have one immigrant parent. "There, in very clear numbers, is what has happened."

Taking in so many immigrants has been challenging for all involved. Most Soviet Jews had lost any connection with their religious roots. "They had very hard times in Russia," said Binyamin Wolff, a Chabad rabbi from New Jersey serving in Helsinki, "and now we have to give them the message that times are different."

Chabad and the JCH are at the forefront of outreach to the immigrant Jews from the FSU. Chabad sponsors monthly gatherings of Russians, and the JCH has a comprehensive program at its day school for kindergarten to 12th grade. Students can enroll in the school as long as one parent is Jewish. Both parents are required to sign a contract stipulating that they want their child to have a Jewish education and that upon reaching bar or bat mitzvah age, the child will be converted to Judaism. For boys, circumcision is required.

The school, which receives 80 percent of its funding from the state and the rest from private donors, goes to great lengths to ensure that students don't completely lose touch with their native background. The school has an intensive language program for children who enter with no knowledge of Finnish, but lessons also are given in Russian to preserve the students' mother tongue.

In addition to the mandated state curriculum, the children learn Jewish history and Hebrew.

"For the children it's a very efficient way to strengthen their Jewish identity and also to integrate into Finnish society," Kantor said. "And of course, through the children, the parents are very efficiently integrated into the community and, also through the community, into society."

But how to integrate adults with virtually no knowledge of their cultural history without boring them or scaring them away? That's a struggle for Rabbi Wolff. "I like them to feel that being Jewish isn't something that's religious or just in synagogue," Wolff said. "I like to show them that being Jewish is something that's a part of our life and it's something enjoyable. We eat like a Jew, we do business like a Jew and we hang out with friends like a Jew, and I like to give them those opportunities."

In some cases, time is the best aid. Tuuminen, whose two grown sons didn't receive a Jewish education while attending state schools in Helsinki, would do things differently if she could. "When you become older," she said, "you become more interested in your history, in where you came from." Still caught between two worlds, Tuuminen said she feels "European, but with a Jewish background" — and, she noted with a laugh, "definitely not Russian." She attends services on the High Holidays, as well as a yearly synagogue commemoration of the formation of the State of Israel, where her mother now lives.

"Today we have about 1,200 members; in the 1980s we had about 800 members, and if you look at the background of the schoolchildren, some 75 percent have one immigrant parent."

Not all of the community's problems have been solved by the influx of Russians, however, and some may even have been aggravated.

According to Kantor, the intermarriage rate has reached a record 90 percent in the past 15 years, up from roughly 50 percent half a century ago. But Kantor is wary of blaming rising intermarriage on the immigrants, noting that their contribution to Finnish Jewry cannot be overstated. "You could say that they've saved the future," he told JTA. ■

Finland's short Jewish history

by Matt Siegel

HELSINKI (JTA) — For any forthcoming edition of Jewish Trivial Pursuit, the Jewish community of Finland might become a source of inspiration.

Consider just these two stumpers: Which Diaspora community contributed the most volunteers per capita during the Israeli War of Independence? In which front did Jews fight alongside Nazi soldiers in World War II?

Jewish roots in Finland go back only a century and a half. The first Jews to settle permanently in this northern land were retired czarist Russian soldiers granted the right of settlement anywhere in the empire regardless of religion.

Local tradition says this was in 1858. Sixty years later, in December 1917 — following Finland's independence from Russia — the country's Parliament granted their descendants full citizenship.

Finland's Jewish population rose between the two world wars, reaching approximately 2,000 in 1939.

During the 1940 war between Finland and Russia, known here as the Winter War, Finnish Jews fought alongside their countrymen. But most surprising to those unfamiliar with this nation's Jewish community could be the fact that Finnish Jews fought in World War II alongside Germany on the Russian front, as their country allied itself with the Nazis.

Even more unusual, the Finnish government afforded Jews full civil rights throughout the war despite strong pressure from the Nazis. Today's community has a memory of a "field synagogue" built by Finnish soldiers in which they could conduct services alongside SS units.

Most interesting, perhaps, is another local story of a Jewish soldier who defied death to rescue a battalion of SS soldiers pinned down by enemy fire. Offered an Iron Cross he refused, in flawless German.

When a German officer asked where he learned to speak so well, the soldier reportedly answered that he was Jewish, and that since Yiddish was his mother language, it was easy for him to speak German. He then marched out of the deathly silent tent. The Finnish government supported his refusal of the award.

The question of the Finnish government's wartime alliance with the Nazis — the country was never occupied in World War II — is often misunderstood outside of Finland, says Dan Kantor, executive director of the Jewish Community of Helsinki.

"We allied with the Germans because they were the only ones who could help us, who came to help us against Russia," Kantor said.

Far from betraying the country's Jews, the death of 23 Jewish soldiers fighting for independence "was really, in a way, some kind of emancipation," he said.

That perspective is supported by the fact that no Finnish Jew was turned over to the Nazis during the war. Eight Austrian Jewish refugees who fled to Finland during the Holocaust were deported.

During Israel's War of Independence, the 29 Finnish volunteers constituted the highest per capita contribution from any Diaspora community, according to Finland's office of the Jewish Agency for Israel.

After the State of Israel was born, Finland had a high rate of aliyah, which reduced Finland's Jewish population considerably. As a result, the country's third-largest Jewish community, in the city of Tampere, ceased operations in 1981.

An influx of Russian Jews since the collapse of the Soviet Union has helped revitalize the community while again linking it to its Russian roots.

The Jewish day school in Helsinki now serves more than 110 students, up from about 60 in the 1980s. Kantor estimates that at least 75 percent of students have at least one immigrant in their immediate family, primarily Russians and Israelis who live and work in Finland. Besides Finnish and Hebrew, Russian is now the most prevalent language at the school.

The country's 1,500 or so Jews continue to have a strong influence on Finnish life. From Max Jakobson, the former Finnish ambassador to the United Nations and candidate for secretary general in 1971, to Ben Zyskowicz — who in 1979 became the first Jewish member of Parliament — the Jews of Finland are part of a unique and accepting culture. ■

There's no place like home: Israeli campaign woos expats

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA)—The message from the Israeli official addressing more than a hundred Israeli expatriates at a Los Angeles synagogue was simple and direct: "We want you to come back."

Translating the catchy slogan into reality is complex, Immigrant Absorption Minster Ze'ev Boim acknowledges.

In the early decades of the Jewish state, Israelis abandoning the homeland were scorned as weaklings, traitors and "yordim," those "going down" from Israel to the diaspora. But the Israeli government for some time has been wooing the growing number of citizens abroad.

Boim was in Los Angeles in recently with a team of government and private industry representatives as part of a campaign in seven American and Canadian cities.

Boim is focusing on holders of Israeli passports, including those with dual citizenship. He estimates that there are 700,000 to 1 million Israeli expats, of whom some 600,000 are in North America, including 150,000 to 200,000 in the Los Angeles area.

Meanwhile, Los Angeles demographer Bruce Phillips maintains that there are 26,000 Israelis in the city.

In each of the cities Boim visited, expats could talk to ministry and private industry specialists about jobs, establishing businesses, housing and government assistance. They also could speak to liaisons with local Israeli consulates.

Boim held out inducements in the form of tax relief, cutting bureaucratic red tape and even deferment from mandatory military service. Additional perks are reserved for those ready to settle in the underpopulated Galilee and Negev regions.

Boim cites the return of some 6,000 expats in 2005 as a promising sign. Conversely, however, about 8,000 to 9,000 Israelis left for residence overseas during the same year.

Some of those at the Los Angeles event stayed to talk about returning home.

Among them was Angie Geffen, the American-born daughter of Israeli parents who traveled from Scottsdale, Ariz., with her husband, Amir, an Israeli electrical engineer. A week later she praised Boim's support staff as organized and helpful, and said the meeting had saved her weeks of research. "We'll move in a couple of months," she said confidently.

Two months later, however, Gefen was complaining about protracted disputes with the Israel housing authorities over obtaining land and homes for her and 32 other families in a Galilee community.

Gefen, her husband and their young son still hope to leave for Israel before Passover, "but we will have to rethink our finances," she said.

Another participant was "Ehud," a 31-year-old teacher at a Jewish day school here who left Israel as a child and asked that his real name not be used.

Ehud said he was impressed by Boim's talk, but not by a 10-minute follow-up interview with one of the minister's assistants.

"When I talked about available job opportunities in Israel, I was told, 'We'll try to find you something when you get there,' " Ehud said.

When he pressed the matter, the interviewer told him, "We don't start the process until you get there."

Ehud still wants to marry and start a family in Israel, but first he may visit to check out the job situation.

Talks with expats yield some common themes: The draw in coming to the United States is nearly always economic opportunity. The pull to return is the sense of social intimacy and togetherness few expats can find elsewhere, and the worry that their children and grandchildren will lose their feeling of Israeli connectedness.

Rivka Dori is among the veteran expats in Los Angeles, arriving in 1966 with her future husband, who came for a college education.

As a longtime teacher—Dori is director of the joint Hebrew studies program at Hebrew Union College and the University of Southern California—she is especially focused on the second generation of American-born Israelis.

The second generation, she believes, "is neither here nor there, not Israeli and not American." Dori established an afterschool program for second-generation Israeli high school students to expose them to modern Hebrew and Israeli culture.

Her students, she said, are exposed to the pressures and attractions of American teen life while their parents try to indoctrinate them with a feeling of loyalty and belonging to Israel—up to a point.

"When the youngsters absorb their parents' lesson and one day tell them that they want to join the Israeli army, the parents are usually horrified," Dori said.

Dori doubts that many of them will follow Boim's exhortation to resettle in Israel, and that when the members of the third generation grow up, "they will be less conflicted and more Americanized."

Avner Hofstein, a reporter for Yediot Achronot, has been the paper's West Coast correspondent for the past four years. Israelis here, as in their native country, are full of contradictions, Hofstein observes.

They have bought into the materialistic life of America while trying to re-create the Israeli neighborhoods and milieu they knew in the 1970s and '80s.

"Israelis have their own cafes, markets, dances, and social and business networks," he said.

"They pop into each others' homes unannounced and are very much into each others' business," he adds. "On the one hand they tend to be hawkish and super Israeli patriots, on the other hand they are highly critical of Israeli society, perhaps to justify their own departure."

The Council of Israeli Communities is the closest to a central expat organization in Los Angeles, with a membership of about 5,000, according to its president, Moshe Salem.

Founded in 2001 to speak up for Israel and its policies, the council now focuses mainly on strengthening relations with the people and culture of the home country.

A sign that the Israeli community is coming of age is that academic researchers are beginning to pay attention to it. Through the Israel American Study Initiative, a group of UCLA scholars and librarians is trying to collect and analyze the chronicles and documents that tell the history and development of the community.

IASI tracks Israeli culture and life in the United States in its BAMA magazine and on its Web site, www.IsraelisinAmerica.org.

Writing in BAMA, Professor David Myers, director of the UCLA Center for Jewish Studies, noted one crucial contribution of Israeli expats, along with Jewish immigrants from Iran and Russia.

Without them, Myers wrote, "The Los Angeles Jewish community would either have hit the wall demographically or be in decline." ■

P.A. forms government amid Israeli skepticism

By Dan Baron

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Palestinians' new unity government may well achieve its immediate aim of healing factional rifts between Hamas and Fatah, but whether it can break up the international isolation of the Palestinian Authority remains unclear.

After a year in which they fought each other more than Israel and sank under a Western embargo the Harmas-Fatah coalition was installed in March.

The big question is whether Hamas has really changed direction or merely sees the more moderate Fatah as a fig leaf to cover its diehard hostility to Israel.

As far as Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is concerned, the answer is clear.

"The platform of the new government includes very problematic elements that cannot be acceptable to Israel or to the international community," he told his Cabinet on Sunday, shortly before it voted to continue a boycott of the Palestinian Authority.

Olmert reiterated Israel's refusal to deal with the new P.A. government until it accepts demands, set by the Quartet of foreign mediators, to recognize the Jewish state and renounce terrorism.

He also said he would limit contacts with P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas, the Fatah leader who had long been Israel's designated peace partner.

"We expect that the international community will not be led astray by the creation of the coalition government," Olmert said.

If there was a note or urgency to this appeal, it may have come in response to signs that some Western nations could abandon an aid and diplomatic boycott imposed on the Palestinian Authority after Hamas took power last March.

While the U.S. State Department voiced alarm at the Palestinian Authority's continued embrace of violent "resistance" against Israel, Washington officials said they may talk to its new finance minister, Salam Fayyad, a reformer who is not from Hamas.

France invited P.A. Foreign Minister Ziad Abu Amr, another political independent, to visit Paris, and diplomats said Britain was expected to pursue contacts with non-Hamas members of the new government.

Still, a full resumption of direct aid to the cash-strapped Palestinian Authority would require consensus among the Quartet — the United States, European Union, United Nations and Russia.

While Moscow has called for the embargo to be abandoned, its partners have adopted a wait-and-see approach to how, and if, the Palestinian Authority pursues diplomacy with Israel.

Amr argued that Hamas, by endorsing Abbas' efforts to negotiate with Israel, had indirectly approved of coexistence between the Jewish state and a future Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"The recognition of Israel is included in the various articles of the program," Amr told The Jerusalem Post.

"If Israel wants recognition, it has to recognize the Palestinians as well," he said. "Today there is no excuse for anybody not to accept the government unless they want us to remain slaves of occupation and Israel, which will never happen."

In fact, Hamas refuses to abandon its 1988 charter calling for Israel's destruction and has publicly described the alliance with Fatah as a "transitional" measure.

That has stoked contrary instincts even within the Israeli government, with some of Olmert's coalition partners calling for a boycott of Abbas along with Hamas, and others urging stepped-up diplomacy with the P.A. president, known familiarly as Abu Mazen.

"It would be better that there be no contact with the new Palestinian government, including Abu Mazen, who in effect provides a cover for the new government," said Strategic Affairs Minister Avigdor Lieberman, head of the right-wing Yisrael Beiteinu party.

But several members of the center-left Labor Party, the senior partner to Olmert's Kadima, said now was the time for Israel to empower Palestinian moderates by engaging Abbas.

"If we want to hurt Hamas politically and militarily, we must open negotiations with Hamas' rival, Abu Mazen — a real negotiation that the Palestinian people will perceive as providing a diplomatic horizon," said Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh of Labor.

For now, Israel may join the Quartet in extending hope for a breakthrough. The forum may be the Arab League summit in Riyadh at month's end, where a Saudi proposal for comprehensive Israeli-Arab peace is to be discussed.

Under the proposal, Israel would win recognition from all Arab states in exchange for a full withdrawal from lands captured in the 1967 Six-Day War and an agreed-upon solution to the Palestinian refugee problem.

Israel has voiced reservations about the phrasing of the proposal, but the possibility that it would co-opt the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority to a full peace deal could now be a major draw for Jerusalem.

But Israel's sole Arab minister said the Olmert government should make its openness to rapprochement clear through greater openness toward the new Palestinian Authority. "Normalization with the Arab world is what we fought for all of these years," said Galeb Majadele. "If, God forbid, we now give even a minimal impression of rejectionism, how will we face the entire world in another two weeks after the Riyadh summit?" ■

Israel in a quandary over Sudanese: Let them stay or send them away

By Yosef Israel Abramowitz

KIBBUTZ KETURA, Israel (JTA) — With two miles of bare footprints behind them, Ahmed and Fatima, and their three children, approached the border with Israel in the middle of a cold winter night. Snow was falling in the Sinai.

Avoid the Egyptian military patrols, they were warned by their Bedouin smugglers, whom they paid with money borrowed from Sudanese friends.

"If they catch you, you could be shot or deported back to Sudan," the Bedouins said.

The 12-hour trip from Cairo was the last leg of a multi-year journey stretching from the violence of Darfur to Sudan's dangerous capital, Khartoum, to the teeming streets of Cairo. Ahmed had been imprisoned in each city.

Israel was their last hope for what Fatima calls "a normal life" without the "fear of being sent back to Sudan."

Two hours after dusting the sand off their dark clothing from crawling under two security fences, their 5-month-old baby's cry pierced the silence of the frigid Negev air.

The response was an Israeli military spotlight.

"Do you know where you are?" the soldiers called out in Arabic.

"Yes," they answered.

"Why are you here?"

"Because we were mistreated in Egypt."

"Who are you?"

"We are Sudanese."

Ahmed lowered his 2-year-old son from his shoulders and held up his Sudanese passport, as well as the worn yellow card from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, or UNHCR. The card had been obtained in Cairo and saved them from being deported back to Sudan, as the Egyptian police had threatened.

The Israeli soldiers gave the children their green military coats.

"We were afraid of the Egyptian army, not of the Israeli army," Ahmed recalled later.

In an often reluctant ritual that has been repeated almost weekly for two years with Sudanese sneaking into Israel, Israel Defense Forces patrols gathered up the tired refugee family, placed them in an ambulance and handed them over to the Border Police.

The Border Police sent Ahmed to Ketziot prison for violating the Infiltration Law, a 1954 statute enacted against enemy combatants.

If the experience of others before him is any precedent, Ahmed could remain incarcerated for at least a year, until Israel figures out what to do with him and the more than 120 other imprisoned Sudanese.

Fatima and the children were sent to a battered women's shelter in the western Galilee that has largely been taken over by Sudanese refugees whose husbands are in prison.

The failure of the United Nations to cope with the doubling of refugee applications in the past decade or to intervene to prevent the genocide in Darfur has had ripple effects throughout the world.

That now includes Israel and the Jewish world.

Faced with genocidal threats from Iran and terrorist groups, a legacy of the Holocaust, and even echoes of the Exodus 3,700 years ago, Israel is torn between its commitment to universal humanitarian concerns and its own security interests.

A four-month JTA investigation into the plight of the refugees and the Israeli government's handling of the situation found a system that even the top Israeli official adjudicating each of the cases has said often violates Israeli and international law.

After two years of legal challenges and growing Israeli media attention, the issue now is coming to a critical juncture.

The practice of arresting and indefinitely detaining Sudanese asylum seekers on security grounds is being tested in the courts even as Israeli Border Police are showing signs of resisting the orders to arrest and detain the refugees crossing the borders.

Major international human rights figures have embraced the cause, and a handful of Knesset members and activists in Israel are pressing for a resolution of the crisis. Some of these activists in turn have strong ties to the American Jewish community, which has embraced the cause of Darfur as a top humanitarian priority.

Some 200,000 to 400,000 people have been killed in the Darfur region of western Sudan. Another 2.5 million have been displaced.

Israel's quandary is a difficult one.

"Sudanese refugees are right now considered enemy nationals since Sudan is an Islamic fundamentalist country," explained Anat Ben Dor, the country's leading refugee rights lawyer, who has emerged as a top advocate for the Sudanese refugees. "Yet Israel is a signatory to the International Convention on Refugees, which guarantees humane treatment and a safe haven from genocide."

Ben Dor, 40, directs the Tel Aviv University Law School Refugee Rights Clinic and in late February filed suit against the government for its alleged treatment of three refugees.

Israel helped author the convention in the aftermath of World War II. Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany were routinely refused safe haven because they, like the current Sudanese, were classified as enemy nationals.

Activists enjoyed a small victory March 21 when Israel's Supreme Court gave the state 45 days to determine whether the detainees were getting a fair and proper judicial review.

"Bringing justice is the issue here," said Supreme Court Chief Justice Dorit Beinisch, who is presiding over a three-judge panel hearing the case.

"This is very significant," said Ben Dor, who together with the Hotline for Migrant Workers, filed the appeal to the court arguing that those Sudanese arrested and put in jail for illegally entering the country should not be charged as infiltrators of an enemy state.

The petition against Israel's defense and interior ministers argues that even though 150 Sudanese have been released into alternative detention, the lack of formal judicial review makes the detention illegal.

Under Israeli law, other nationals who sneak through the Sinai desert into Israel are charged with the Law of Entry. In those cases, the government must review their cases every 30 days and justify their imprisonment. But since Sudanese are considered "enemy nationals," they are charged under the harsher Infiltration Law, which has no official review mechanism and by which detainees can be held indefinitely.

Irwin Cotler, Canada's former minister of justice and human rights attorney to such well-known dissidents as Natan Sharansky and Nelson Mandela, has joined with the Israel Bar Association in filing supporting documents on behalf of the Sudanese to the Israeli High Court.

"Israel should be more part of the international struggle against genocide in Darfur," Cotler said. "If Israel grants refugee status or temporary resident status to the Sudanese, it can be Israel's own modest contribution to speaking up against the genocide rather than interring them and making the opposite statement."

PHOTO COURTESY OF JERRY FOWLER, U.S. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

At the Iridimi camp in Chad in May 2004, Sudanese refugees make shelters from donated sheeting and bits of local material.

Although the numbers are fluid, an estimated 300 Sudanese have arrived in Israel over the past two years. Of these, some 120 remain in prison; the rest are in alternative detention, meaning crisis centers, kibbutzim or moshavim, where many of them work and live but are not free to leave the premises.

Another estimated dozen or so Sudanese men in the Sinai are partnered with Israeli women and have children, but cannot enter Israel for fear of arrest.

Sigal Rozen, 39, co-founded the Hotline for Migrant Workers with a grant from the New Israel Fund. Her tiny fourth-floor offices next door to a Tel Aviv police station are a hot spot for undocumented workers of all colors and nationalities who come knocking for assistance.

The hot line brings them to the U.N. High Commissioner on Refugees offices to get protection papers, documents that verify their refugee status so they can qualify for a temporary work visa.

"There are people from all over the world who come to Israel," Rozen said. ``If a Turk and a Chinese come across the border with a Sudanese, only the Sudanese is imprisoned. That is discrimination."

Israeli government officials say the situation is a difficult one.

"The Israeli government is endeavoring to deal with this issue as humanely as possible," said Mark Regev, a spokesman for the Foreign Ministry. "Jewish history has made us especially sensitive to genocide. No one is being sent back to the inferno in Darfur."

At the same time, he said, "we have to take precautions" to minimize the security risk given where the refugees come from.

In the March 21 court case, state attorneys argued that the system was working and there was no need to change the legalities under which the Sudanese are being held.

Some officials, in private conversations and in Knesset testimony, contend that beyond the immediate security concerns about individual Sudanese, the greater fear is the ripple effect of even more refugees seeking asylum in the Jewish state.

The fault lines drawn around the refugee battle between those advocating deportation and those advocating granting asylum is "a paradox," as one high-ranking Jewish organizational official called it.

"Israel is deeply sensitive to the issue of genocide," this official said, ``but it is also worried about a massive influx of Sudanese at its border."

The prevailing government preference is to deport the refugees back to Egypt -- if Egypt will guarantee it will not deport them back to Sudan.

"The natural and correct solution is a return to Egypt," Eliyahu Aharoni, deputy director of the Immigration Police, testified to the Knesset in late December.

"Sudan is one of six nations that supports Islamic terror," he said. ``All the security services say that there is a danger when it comes to the Sudanese. Detention or alternative detention is legitimate in a democratic country and also in the State of Israel."

Debate is being waged about how many Sudanese would seek refuge here if the detainees are released from prison and accorded good treatment in the Jewish state.

"What we do here will determine if 3 million will come" from Egypt or will stay there, said Yossi Edelshtein, director of the Enforcement Unit of the Immigration Police.

The 3 million figure is often cited by Israeli policy makers, particularly in the security services. But others dispute those figures.

"Anyone who talks about millions of Sudanese coming to Israel is scare-mongering," said Michael Kagan, an American human rights lawyer who has worked in Israel and Egypt. "No one even knows that there are millions of Sudanese in Egypt; some estimate there are only a few hundred thousand.

``But in any case, we're not talking about all Sudanese. We're talking about refugees," he said. ``The U.N. says there are only 15,000 Sudanese refugees in Egypt, and of these, how many are going to pay big money, risk their lives and risk arrest to go over the desert to Israel?"

As to the porous border with Egypt, it is not the Sudanese that Israel most worries about but terrorists like Muhammed Faisal Saksak. On Jan. 29, the 21-year-old Palestinian crossed the border about 12 miles north of the resort city of Eilat and blew himself up in a small bakery, killing three.

In either a slip of the tongue or a calculated leak to remind the Knesset of the potential security risks of too liberal an asylum policy, Aharoni of the Immigration Police revealed

Continued on next page

Team effort strengthens Darfur cause

Israeli, U.S. groups become one in fighting for the Darfur refugees

By Yosef Israel Abramowitz

KIBBUTZ KETURA, Israel (JTA) Michael Bavli, a former Israeli ambassador, was pulled out of retirement by the United Nations eight years ago to establish an asylum system in Israel with support from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the relief arm of American Jewry.

Bavli, 71, now serves as the point man in Israel for the U.N. High Commission on Refugees.

He is one of several Israelis official and unofficial playing a key role in determining the fate of the some 300 Sudanese refugees in Israel today.

Bavli often is also the first address for a host of American Jewish organizations that have expressed concern about Israeli policy on the refugees.

"I welcome it," he said of the American Jewish involvement. "We all want Israel to do the right thing."

Indeed, the Darfur issue has brought Israeli and American Jewish groups together in an unusual way.

"American Jewish organizations and individuals, along with key NGOs and individuals in Israel, have mobilized on a common issue that is not parochial," said Rabbi Ed Rettig, associate director and coordinator of relief activities of the Jerusalem office of the American Jewish Committee , which donated warm winter clothing to dozens of Sudanese prisoners being held in the open-air Ketziot prison.

The head of his office, Eran Lerman, sent letters to all government ministers and to the Prime Minister's Office.

"There isn't a synagogue in the United States where Darfur is not an issue," he told JTA. "You can't imprison refugees from Darfur in the Jewish state and not expect American Jewry to be upset."

Ruth Messinger, president of the American Jewish World Service, is credited with putting Darfur on the agenda both of the Jewish organizational world and mainstream America.

AJWS was pivotal in organizing the Save Darfur Coalition's two rallies — one outside the United Nations headquarters last September and one in Washington last April.

Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel was the keynote speaker opening the Washington rally, which attracted about 75,000 participants, approximately half from the Jewish community.

Some 200,000 to 400,000 people have been killed and 2.5 million displaced as a result of the genocide.

"The American Jewish community has been and continues to be not only tremendously concerned about the ongoing genocide in Darfur, Sudan, but also hugely active in protesting the deteriorating situation in that region," Messinger said.

She said national organizations and religious denominations, many congregations and Hillels, and tens of thousands of individuals have been writing letters, attending rallies, calling elected officials and organizing in their communities trying to pressure the United States and the United Nations to ensure that a robust U.N. peacekeeping force be employed to stop the killing.

Messinger said there has been concern among some American Jews about the situation of the Sudanese imprisoned in Israel. She has been in regular contact with Israeli officials in New York "urging rapid action by the government to free these individuals and guarantee that they will not be returned to Sudan."

Messinger and other Jewish officials have also continued to raise the issue with other high-level Israeli officials.

It was the American Jewish attention on the Darfur issue that inspired Eytan Schwartz, the winner of Israel's first "Ambassador" reality televison show, to become involved.

Schwartz, 32, American born and Israeli educated, was sent to the United States two years ago to work with college students and Jewish organizations to help them advocate for Israel.

But instead of being confronted with political issues, he said, "Everywhere I went, it was Darfur, Darfur, Darfur. I knew there was a genocide in Darfur, but was not aware of the magnitude of the American Jewish response."

When Schwartz returned to Israel, he called Sigal Rozen at the Hotline for Migrant Workers and volunteered to make weekly visits to Sudanese refugees in prison.

Schwartz now serves as the spokesman for CARD, the Committee for the Advancement of Refugees from Darfur [www.cardisrael.org], a coalition of 10 nongovernmental organizations working on behalf of the Sudanese refugees in Israel.

CARD's chair is Yehudah Bauer, a distinguished Holocaust scholar who addressed the U.N. General Assembly last year to mark the first U.N. Remembrance Commemoration of the Holocaust.

"In terms of security, it is our position that a short detention of any illegal incomer is legitimate, as long as its purpose is a speedy security check," Schwartz said. ``However, once the security authorities are satisfied with the results of the interrogation and determine that the incomer is indeed an innocent refugee, the detainee should be released from detention.

"I love my country, and I see my country not doing the right thing," he said.

The actions on Sudanese refugees in Israel "reflects a new model of Israel-Diaspora partnership," agrees Larry Garber, executive director of the Washington-based New Israel Fund.

Garber said that last spring, after the rally in Washington, he asked his counterpart in Israel, Eliezer Ya'ari, whether concern about the Darfur genocide resonated at all in Israel.

Until that point, Garber said, "the issue had not much entered the public consciousness." But then Israelis discovered that the Hotline for Migrant Workers, a longtime NIF grantee, was assisting refugees from Darfur who had found their way to Israel.

The hotline "wanted assistance in publicizing the plight of their clients, most of whom were being kept in detention centers under terrible conditions," Garber said. "With NIF assistance, primarily through discussions with key media contacts and behind-the-scenes conversations with government officials, the topic quickly became front-page news in Israel."

Ultimately, he said, the more egregious aspects of government policy toward Sudanese refugees were changed, and many were released from the detention centers, although their asylum petitions were not necessarily granted.

"The depth of concern about the Darfur genocide among American Jewish organizations influenced Israeli officials to modify their posture of seeming indifference to the situation in Sudan and their treatment of the Sudanese refugees residing in Israel," he said.

Anat Ben Dor, the Israeli lawyer who has filed suit in Israel on behalf of the imprisoned refugees, said the involvement of American Jewry in the issue "could be the deciding factor in winning the release of the prisoners."

"The Israeli government has a lot on its plate right now and it can't afford to jeopardize the support of American Jewry, who are very clear about where they stand on Darfur," Ben Dor said. ■

Sudanese from previous page

to legislators in his Knesset testimony that "it appears that one Sudanese refugee belonging to al-Qaida was released."

Half a dozen ministries, including the Prime Minister's Office, would not respond to queries about the link.

Daniel Ben-Zaken, the director of Ketziot prison, which is holding many of the detainees, told JTA: "We asked and we received no information about anyone connected to anything like that."

In 2005, the security forces caught 5,600 people trying to infiltrate across the Egyptian-Israeli border, including drug and weapon smugglers, women destined for prostitution, foreign workers and refugees.

In 2006, 100 of those caught trying to infiltrate belonged to terror organizations, according to Israeli media reports. That same year, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees in Israel saw an increase in its case load, with 1,600 applying for refugee or asylum status, up from 1,000 in 2005.

Most of the increase was from foreign workers who did not want to return to their native lands, often because of wars in the Congo, Sierra Leone, the Ivory Coast and other African countries.

The number of Sudanese seeking protection in Israel started to increase after Egyptian police killed 27 and injured several hundred Sudanese refugees protesting outside the UNHCR office in Cairo at the end of December 2005.

None of the Sudanese who have crossed into Israel in the past 18 months has been granted asylum or temporary refugee status, according to Michael Bavli, head of the UNHCR office in Israel.

This contrasts with the some 200 asylum seekers from many countries, including some Sudanese, who had been granted permanent asylum in Israel between 1985 and 2005. An additional 700 non-Sudanese refugees were granted temporary asylum during that time.

With each new arrival stretching an embryonic asylum system of the state, the issue of the Sudanese has been coming to a boil.

A Knesset lobby headed by Labor Party member Avishai Braverman and Likud member Gilad Erdan formed last November to "push for the release of all the prisoners who have sought asylum in Israel," said the lobby spokesman Yehuda Minkovitz.

Its focus is having the prisoners released and then advocating for at least some being granted permanent asylum status in Israel.

"I am ashamed as a person and as a Jew," Braverman told JTA, referring to the practice of imprisoning asylum seekers. "We of all people have to know how to behave."

The Knesset Committee on Foreign Workers held a Christmas Day hearing on the issue under the chairmanship of Ron Cohen of Meretz.

Two days later, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni sat across the table from Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit at the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem, and asked her counterpart if Egypt would consider taking back some of the refugees, according to a senior Foreign Ministry source who asked not to be identified.

Livni wanted to know if Egypt would consider a "hot return" policy, which would mean an immediate return into the Sinai of the refugees at the time they are picked up by the IDF on the border. She also explored the possibility of an organized return to Egypt of all the Sudanese refugees who carry U.N. blue cards, meaning they were recognized as refugees in Cairo and are eligible for third-country resettlement from Egypt.

The Egyptian Embassy declined to comment on the exchange.

Just as the Egyptian foreign minister was returning to Cairo with the Israeli request to help them facilitate hot returns, Ahmed and Fatima packed two small bags and quietly left the Egyptian capital, beginning their journey to cross illegally into Israel.

Three days later, when Fatima arrived at the shelter in Israel's North, she was greeted with media reports that Israel was considering deporting her and her family back to Egypt. She quickly dictated an impassioned letter in Arabic, which was translated into Hebrew by a Druze linguist, and it was sent to the Knesset lobby, which sent a direct appeal to Defense Minister Amir Peretz.

Peretz's office has not responded to requests for an interview.

In her letter, Fatima briefly recounted her family's flight.

"I beg you not to let them send us away from here... I know that if they send us back to Egypt, we'll go to prison and perhaps never get out," she wrote. ``We could also be sent to the Sudanese Embassy, and from there back to Sudan, and that will be the end of us. We'll die like all the others who have died there." ■

Yosef Israel Abramowitz is an award-winning journalist and founder of socialaction.com. Abramowitz, who moved with his family last year to Israel, blogs daily at peoplehood.org. JTA correspondent Dina Kraft in Israel contributed to this piece. The names of the refugees have been changed to protect from reprisals against family members in Arab countries.

As economy grows, so does class chasm

By Dina Kraft

TEL AVIV (JTA)—In a shimmering luxury hotel overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, Israel's banking and financial elite mingled over cocktails recently with foreign investors as they watched Donald Trump on a live telecast praise the strength of the Israeli market.

Across the street from the David Intercontinental, meanwhile, more than 1,000 people protested the country's premier business conference, chanting "welfare before wealth."

Welcome to 21st-century Israel in microcosm.

Once idealized as a socialist paradise, the Jewish state is increasingly becoming a country of two classes—those who have soared in the increasingly capitalist economy and those who have stumbled in its wake.

Despite its much mythologized egalitarian image, Israel has always experienced economic gaps. But now the divide between haves and have-nots has grown to alarming proportions. If economic policies and other factors have spawned a privileged class, they also have produced a deeply entrenched underclass populated by the elderly, Holocaust survivors, Arabs, immigrants, fervently Orthodox Jews, single parents—even two-income families.

One of the many faces representing this underclass is R., a poverty-stricken, 43-year-old mother of four.

At a Tel Aviv-area hospital, she weeps in the corridor as her children are being treated. "Things are very hard for people like us; there is no life, no holidays, no Shabbat," said R., who lives in the Tel Aviv suburb of Holon about five miles from the hotel hosting the business conference.

Like others interviewed for this series, R. was so ashamed of her plight that she asked that her real name not be used. Her apartment was repossessed recently by the bank, and now she faces eviction from another one because she cannot pay the rent.

R. stopped working full-time as a government clerk when two of her children became chronically ill. She and her family now live mostly off her husband's monthly salary of

One of every four Israelis lives below the poverty line—that's 1.6 million people.

$760 as an employee of a moving company. Government child allowances and her occasional work cleaning the staircases of apartment buildings bring the family's monthly income up to about $1,010, officially putting the family among Israel's 20 percent of households living below the poverty line.

Poverty rates in Israel reached a new peak in 2005, although they leveled off in 2006, according to statistics by the National Insurance Institute. According to institute findings, one of every four Israelis lives below the poverty line—that's 1.6 million people.

Thirty-five percent of children are living in poverty, leaving Israel with this unhappy distinction: It ranks among Western countries with the greatest percentage of poor children, according to the insurance institute.

"Children who grow up in poverty are more than likely to live in poverty as adults," said John Gal, an economist at the Hebrew University. "They won't have the capacity, human capital and capabilities to be able to get out of poverty, to be mobile in society."

Chana Eliyahu, 35, grew up in a family living in poverty, and now as an unemployed single mother of a 2-year-old girl, she has become part of that cycle.

She lives off of $640 a month in welfare and child subsidy payments, and has trouble finding full-time work because she suffers from anxiety attacks.

Eliyahu lives on the second floor of an apartment building in one of Tel Aviv's roughest neighborhoods, one populated by drug dealers and prostitutes. To reach her small apartment, one has to pass brothels and climb a staircase reeking of urine and rotting garbage.

Her daughter, Hila, is her inspiration to find a better life, outside the walls of an apartment where she fights off rats and cockroaches and tries to ignore the peeling paint.

"My dream for her is to live in a normal place," said Eliyahu after collecting a week's supply of dry goods and diapers from the relief group Food for the Disadvantaged. "She'll go to a school where there are no drugs or violence, and will go to extracurricular activities. We'll do her homework together. She's so smart."

The rich get richer

Meanwhile, about a mile away from Eliyahu's apartment, at the business conference, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert boasts that the Israeli economy is in top form.

As evidence that at least one sector is thriving, consider that the number of Israeli millionaires per capita is twice the world average, according to the 2005 World Wealth Report.

Some 7,400 Israelis are worth at least $1 million, the report said, including 84 who have at least $30 million. The total liquid assets of Israel's upper echelon grew by 25 percent, to $30 billion, between 2004 and 2005, according to the report. Those designated by the report as the nine richest Israelis made their fortunes in everything from diamonds to real estate to communications to entertainment.

During his December speech at the David Intercontinental, however, Olmert also acknowledged the roughly one-third of Israeli children living in poverty and announced $143 million in government funding for a new program that aims to help children at risk.

Although the general standard of living in Israel has risen in recent years, the lower socioeconomic classes have seen their situation plummet, largely due to massive cuts in government social spending that began in 2002.

The budget cuts reflect an ideological and policy trend that is reordering the country's class structure, according to Uri Ram, a sociologist at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, and the author of the upcoming book *The Globalization of Israel: McWorld in Tel Aviv, Jihad in Jerusalem.*

Even the Labor Party, which typically is associated with generous social welfare spending, has gone back on its founding values, said Ram, to become a part "of this process of transforming Israel from a welfare society into this kind of free-market, corporate-dominated society."

French immigrant Gilles Darmon saw immediate evidence of that socioeconomic transformation when he arrived in Israel in 1994, and it shocked him.

"Zionist organizations like the Jewish Agency and the Foreign Ministry don't like people to start talking about poverty when they want to establish the appearance of a normal country, so I thought there was not

The number of Israeli millionaires per capita is twice the world average, according to the 2005 World Wealth Report.

much poverty," said Darmon, who works in finance. "But when I arrived I said, 'Wow, there is a problem.' "

In 1996, Darmon established La'tet, the country's first and largest food bank, which is headquartered in Tel Aviv. With the help of 114 local organizations, La'tet collects and distributes 3,500 tons of free food a year to about 30,000 to 40,000 impoverished families throughout Israel.

Demand for La'tet's services has grown 300 percent in the past three years, which Darmon says is an ominous signal.

"When you have such a jump in a Western society like Israel, it means something very major is happening in the society, something has collapsed in the involvement of the state in social issues," he said.

Bibi's plan

Some say the current economic disequilibrium in Israel can be traced to the neo-conservative fiscal policies of the Likud Party acting at the behest of then-Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who believed that Israel's economy had become too bloated and bureaucratic to compete in the global market.

Netanyahu's remedy: Cut spending, reduce dependence on government services and reduce inflation. While Netanyahu is no longer the finance minister, the same approach remains in place today.

The resultant budget cuts that began in 2002 included the elimination of food subsidies, a decrease in child allowances, increasingly stringent eligibility standards for welfare, the elimination of many social programs for the elderly and a reduction in welfare benefits.

The cuts effectively shredded the social safety net, leaving many families unprepared for the misery that would follow, social policy activists say.

But since the early 1990s, with the mass arrival of immigrants from the former Soviet Union and the growth of the high-tech sector, Israel has seen itself become an increasingly capitalist society, a society where the economically strong survive and those in the middle and lower rungs have had some trouble adjusting.

Among the hardest hit have been the elderly, single-parent households and large families, which in Israel usually means either Arabs or fervently Orthodox Jews, also known as haredim. According to the National Insurance Institute, about two-thirds of families below the poverty line are either haredim or Arabs.

Haredi women are the focus of a unique employment initiative in a West Bank community that has produced encouraging results there and elsewhere. Haredi men are being trained in professions ranging from computer programmers to bus drivers.

As for Israeli Arabs, results and programming have been less dramatic. Many, however, have participated in recent government welfare-to-work program pilots modeled on the American "Wisconsin Program."

In contemporary Israel, minimum-wage salaries—about $12,800 per year for a couple with two children—are insufficient to pull a family out of poverty. As a result, even many dual-income earners find themselves setting stark spending priorities for themselves and their families. They sometimes have to choose between buying food or medicine or paying the rent.

Avraham Sobolson, 55, said he often struggled with the dilemma of buying food or medicine to treat his ailments—including physical problems such as diabetes and mental woes like schizophrenia—until Food for the Disadvantaged began delivering weekly packages to his one-room apartment in the Hadar Yosef neighborhood of Tel Aviv.

The former professional weightlifter and wrestler with a round, thick face and bald head now is confined to a wheelchair because of a blood disease that affects his legs. Sobolson lives in a dark, dank ground-floor apartment with bare floors and little furniture—a bed, a couple of plastic chairs, a teetering narrow plywood wardrobe and a shelving unit stacked with medicine bottles and gauzes.

On the walls of peeling paint hang what he calls his certificates that speak of his past as an athlete and coach. A thick layer of grime clings to the walls and floor.

Sobolson lives off of $540 a month in disability payments and volunteers teaching tai chi from his wheelchair to groups of the mentally ill. He is fighting the National Insurance Institute for an allowance that would let him hire an assistant to help him bathe and clean his apartment. The money also would pay for taxis so he could more easily reach the class he teaches, which is outside Tel Aviv.

"The National Insurance Institute has no feelings about sick people," he said. "Do you know how many people there are like me out there?"

Seniors, survivors feel sting

The elderly have also disproportionately felt the sting of cuts in social spending. Unable to save for pensions, some senior citizens find themselves living off monthly checks of roughly $400 from the National Insurance Institute. And as they age and become more frail and ill, their costs for medicine and nursing assistance rise while their incomes shrink.

There is no mandatory pension law in Israel, although Finance Minister Avraham Hirschson again called for one as part of his economic reform plan announced in late January.

Among the impoverished elderly are many Holocaust survivors. In fact, NoahFlug, who heads an umbrella group of Holocaust survivor organizations in Israel estimated that about one-quarter of Israel's 250,000 survivors are living in poverty.

"There is lots of focus in Israel on those

Continued on nxt page

Poverty in Israel: Ideas made in America boost bid to get Israelis back to work

By Dina Kraft

TEL AVIV (JTA)—Eti Sharabi walked through the glass doors and marveled at the shining hardwood floors and the walls splashed with green and orange, making this space feel more like a sleek advertising or architectural firm than an office to help the unemployed.

She found herself in the headquarters of STRIVE after not working outside the home since her first child was born 15 years ago.

"I lost faith in myself and thought I would never find it again," said Sharabi, 38, now a mother of four. "Here they have given me so much strength."

Sharabi is part of the expanding Israeli underclass—a populace that includes the unemployed, the underemployed and the destitute. Many are casualties of what some consider draconian economic policies.

STRIVE, an intensive work-readiness program, is modeled after an initiative of the same name that began more than 20 years ago in Harlem to help women on welfare overcome their severe difficulties in finding and keeping meaningful jobs.

The program's core message: Participants are important as individuals and therefore are worthy not just of make-work employment but of fulfilling careers.

That message of personal empowerment and tough love is underscored, its organizers explain, by the professional and pleasant look and feel of the STRIVE offices, as well as the intensive personal guidance that the organization provides its clients for more than two years after they enroll.

Participants are counseled in everything from how to pay off personal debts and find creative childcare solutions to discovering and pursuing an ambitious career path that suits their interests and abilities.

STRIVE is one of at least two programs operating in Israel patterned after American-originated efforts to boost employment among the economically struggling and long-time unemployed. It is funded by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Israeli government.

Another such American transplant is called Mehalev, Hebrew for "from the heart," and it is based on the state of Wisconsin's welfare-to-work plan unveiled in the mid-1990s after the U.S. Congress revamped welfare regulations.

One STRIVE participants is Tsivka Ben-Porat, 36 who spent a decade working in hotel kitchens as a cook—he was unemployed for several months before finding STRIVE. With the help of its counselors and coaches, Ben-Porat is now working at a media company editing video, a steppingstone in his new chosen career: communications.

The program, he said, "is like being given a key to life, professionally and personally."

Another STRIVE participant is Hanan Jaffaly, 32, an Arab Israeli single mother of two who had been in and out of what she described as dead-end customer service jobs for years. She supports her children on her own, with no assistance from her family.

Through STRIVE, Jaffaly is hoping to realize her goal of eventually becoming a social worker and finally create a stable, middle-class life for her family.

Mehalev was designed as a two-year pilot program in four Israeli cities. Launched in 2005, it was aimed initially at getting at least half of the country's 150,000 welfare recipients off the public rolls and back to work. Participants are required to report to employment placement centers for 30 hours a week or lose their welfare income, which averages about $380 per month for an individual.

Safi Sasson, 40, has his first job ever after going through the program. He had spent the majority of his adult life involved in petty crime and spent a total of eight years in prison, off and on, for offenses that included selling drugs and theft.

Sasson never imagined being able to be a salaried worker, but for the past three months he has held down a job as a construction worker. He's doing so well, his boss is planning on giving him a raise.

"I was apprehensive about working; I had never done it before," he said. "I've learned a lot, most of all that I am capable of working. In the past I thought no one would ever hire me because of my criminal past.

"I wake up in the morning and I have somewhere to go. I'm feeling great, and it's all because of thework."

Is Mehalev working? The program, however, has met with mixed results and has been widely denounced in the Israeli media and by social welfare advocates, who maintain that Mehalev has backfired. Rather than increase employment, detractors charge, the program has swelled the ranks of Israelis who receive neither paychecks nor public assistance.

A recent report by the National Insurance Institute, the Israeli equivalent of the Social Security Administration in the United States, found that the program saved Israel $1.43 million in welfare payments since it began, but that relatively few of its participants had found work, the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz reported.

The savings in welfare payments apparently stemmed from people who had dropped out of the program and had their payments cut off.

More than 80 of the Knesset's 120 members signed on to proposed legislation recently that called for a major overhaul of the program. The bill calls for, among other things, canceling the stipulation that all unemployed people, such as single mothers or those with part-time work, participate full time in the program or lose their welfare benefits.

The bill also would provide alternative arrangements for the disabled, those nearing retirement age, people who speak little or no Hebrew, and others who activists say are hurt by the program in its present form.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert approved the establishment of a government committee that will work to make major changes in the program to address some of these same issues.

According to Dorit Novack, until recently the administrator of Mehalev, in the program's first year 11,000 job placements were found for participants. About double that number initially reported to the centers.

Not all the participants stayed in those jobs, however. The figure of 11,000 job placements includes those who have been placed in several jobs successively, Novack noted. But those figures, she said, do constitute progress.

"I am not saying the project has not made mistakes," Novack said. "But the main point of this program is trying to help people change their future. If they are now working a minimum-wage job, that is double what they were making on welfare. I would prefer to see every person work as long as they are able physically."

One of the main differences between the Wisconsin program in the United States and the Israeli version is the demographic profile of the participants. In the United States, the focus is predominately on young, black, single mothers. But in Israel, the clients are men and women, often older than 40, many of them immigrants or Arabs. Some have physical or mental disabilities or limited Hebrew-language skills.

All told, many participants were funneled into the program by the National Insurance Institute without an adequate assessment of "who might be a good fit," according to Sari Revkin, executive director of Yedid, a Jerusalem-based social welfare organization.

"The idea [is] not to get people to change their motivation and skills," Revkin said. "It's to get them into a job quickly. With the population of new immigrants and Arabs this is very, very problematic."

One of the four program centers in Israel is located in Nazareth, the largest Arab city in Israel, where some participants are women older than 50 who have never held jobs and have rarely traveled beyond their home villages. Now they are expected to find employment that may carry cultural baggage in the form of their husbands' or families' disapproval over them working at outside jobs, critics say.

Meanwhile, many workplaces in Arab locales pay below minimum wage. And those Arabs who seek work in predominately Jewish areas such as west Jerusalem sometimes encounter discrimination and consequently are refused employment.

However, Roy Newey, group board director for A4E, the British company running the pilot Mehalev program in Jerusalem, said he has seen some success in placing Arab women in jobs. He cites 15 women who found work on a mushroom farm near Jerusalem for about $830 a month, the Israeli minimum wage.

"They have self-esteem, finances, purpose in their lives," Newey said. "It's a real success story."

Of the 8,000 participants who have come through the Jerusalem Mehalev, 3,000 have found and kept jobs since they joined the program in the past year and a half.

Role playing for success

At the STRIVE office in Tel Aviv—others are planned for Haifa and Jerusalem—a class in how to undergo a group interview is taking place.

In keeping with the STRIVE emphasis on nurturing long-term careers rather than landing stopgap jobs, participants are urged to dress for success. As a result, the Tel Aviv role players are wearing proper business attire-dark pants, skirts and button-down shirts.

In preparation for the group interview, a common hiring exercise used by Israeli firms, half the class is given a problem to solve collectively. The other half observes and provides feedback on how their classmates performed. For example, they evaluate who displayed leadership qualities, who was a good team player, who knew how to set priorities and who failed to participate sufficiently.

"The enthusiasm is catching and they start believing in themselves, and we see people with very limited desires jump to much wider horizons," said Amir Natan, 33, a former high-tech executive who directs STRIVE in Israel.

Nearly 90 percent of STRIVE participants have found jobs.

One is Sharabi, who said she plans to start work as an office clerk, with hopes of eventually becoming an accountant.

"My oldest son said he has such fun watching me do homework and seeing me interested in something," she said.

Sharabi then politely excuses herself from talking about the program to continue participating in it. The assignment: A role-playing workshop aimed at familiarizing clients with the ins and outs of office jobs.

There is still a lot to learn, she says with a smile. ■

Continued from previous page

killed in the Holocaust, but those who lived through it are forgotten," said Flug.

The social welfare crisis in Israel was reflected in the 2006 national elections. Instead of national security taking center stage, the social gaps were a dominant theme in the campaign. Likud was roundly punished through what was seen in part as backlash against Netanyahu's economic policies—the party landed only 12 seats in the Knesset after earning 36 in the previous vote. Labor returned to its quasi-socialist roots, promising to deal with the growing gap between rich and poor.

But a few months after the new government came to power with Labor as a partner, the war with Hezbollah broke out and the national focus again shifted to security issues.

Ironically, though, the war highlighted the chasm in Israeli society between haves and have-nots.

Those who could afford to leave the North did so. The poor, however, were left behind to fend for themselves in bomb shelters.

Without the government to provide sufficient help, private social welfare organizations have proliferated in recent years. Such groups were at the forefront of assisting those in the North during the Hezbollah war, delivering food, medicine and psychological care.

Sari Revkin, who nine years ago founded the citizens-rights organization Yedid: The Association for Community Empowerment, said the needs of the underclass grow every month and the government "seems to sink back into silence."

"We've been put in the position of doing what the government should be doing, knowing that if we turn people away they will retrench into themselves," she said. "Three thousand new people a month come [to us] for help."

Meanwhile, R. of Holon awaits an uncertain future.

"The cell phone company wants to take away my phone, the electricity company says they are going to cut me off," she said. "And there is no government budget to help us, my social worker tells me."

She gets free food packages from the Israeli charity Ezer Mizion, which has seen the demand for food soar in the past year.

Moshe Traube, the manager of the Holon-Bat Yam branch of the charity, said the tragic stories of destitution and abandonment he hears constantly can be overwhelming.

"Here the rich get richer and poor get poorer," he said. "Everyone has to struggle for him or herself alone." ■

Many guests at AIPAC event, but one is most unwanted — Iraq

by Ron Kampeas

WASHINGTON (JTA) — AIPAC's annual policy conference is truly a come-one, come-all event, with a "roll call" at the gala dinner announcing the hundreds of VIPs in attendance. But this year, one uninvited guest kept turning up — the Iraq war.

No matter how hard the American Israel Public Affairs Committee tried to keep the 6,000 activists at its conference focused on the consensus issue of Iran's nuclear threat, Republicans and Israeli officials kept bringing up what is likely the most divisive issue of the day.

The equation promoted by those who support continuing the war is simple: Israel's security requires a continued U.S. presence in Iraq, and questioning President Bush's policy is tantamount to undermining Israel and the United States.

"When America succeeds in Iraq, Israel is safer," Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said in a live satellite address from his Jerusalem home that capped the gala dinner. "The friends of Israel know it, the friends who care about Israel know it. They will keep the Americans strong, powerful and convincing."

Vice President Dick Cheney was even more blunt.

"Friends owe it to friends to be as candid as possible," he said. "My friends, it is simply not consistent for anyone to demand aggressive action against the menace that is posed by the Iranian regime while at the same time acquiescing in a retreat from Iraq that would leave Israel's best friend, the United States, dangerously weakened."

The equation infuriated Democrats.

The sniping on Iraq — at one point it devolved into scattered boos for Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), the speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives — ran counter to AIPAC billing that the event would be an unmatched show of bipartisan support for Israel.

But a spokesman for the pro-Israel lobby powerhouse said the Iraq issue did not detract from the conference's focus.

"Our focus is on the things we're lobbying on," Josh Block said.

The March 12 gala dinner drew half the U.S. Senate and more than half the House. It featured addresses by Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nev.), the Senate majority leader, and Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), its minority leader.

The next morning, Pelosi and Rep. John Boehner (R-Ohio), the House minority leader, headlined the traditional Tuesday-morning sendoff to the Capitol for a day of lobbying.

McConnell and Boehner also attempted to build support for the administration's recent deployment of more than 20,000 additional troops to Iraq. Sen. Joseph Lieberman (I-Conn.) made it the centerpiece of his speech.

"There is something profoundly wrong when, in the face of attacks by radical Islam, we think we can find safety and stability by pulling back, by talking to and accommodating our enemies, and abandoning our friends and allies," Lieberman said to a group that he likes to call "family."

"Some of this wrong-headed thinking about the world is happening because we're in a political climate where, for many people, when George Bush says yes, their reflex reaction is to say no," he said. "That is unacceptable."

Democrats, speaking on background, said they were unsettled by how Iraq kept intruding into an event dedicated to securing Israel.

Some top AIPAC officials also appeared appalled by the advocacy for Bush's plan to increase troop levels in Iraq.

Amy Friedkin, a past AIPAC president who is close to Pelosi, stared stonily at Cheney's back as he delivered his warning.

The reception to Cheney's speech was lukewarm at best; he earned no more than three standing ovations, and applause was mostly polite.

The attempt to force the Iraq issue into the AIPAC conference appeared coordinated in part by the White House. AIPAC closed Lieberman's session Monday to the press, though it had been touted as being open. That kept his message of support for the troop surge out of the headlines – for 24 hours.

> ***"Stiff sanctions and targeted divestments — these will be our focus as we work to keep the pressure on Iran,"***
>
> ***– AIPAC Executive Director Howard Kohr***

Lieberman's office distributed the remarks Tuesday, and within minutes they were forwarded to Jewish leaders by the White House liaison to the Jewish community with a note labeling them as "important."

It did not help AIPAC's case for bipartisanship that the lobby this week successfully pressed for the removal of a provision in an Iraq war funding bill that would have required the president to get congressional approval for war against Iran.

Many Democrats favored the provision because it reasserted Congress' constitutional role in declaring war, which some charge Bush has eroded in Iraq. AIPAC and some other Democrats close to Israel feared the clause would restrain Bush as he pushes Iran to come clean about its nuclear program.

"I don't know that you need to put in a supplemental budget bill that you believe in the U.S. Constitution," Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.), a Jewish congressman who supported leaving out the Iran provision, told JTA. "That should be obvious.

"If you're trying to get a terrorist rogue regime to give up its weapons," he said, "you should get them to think maybe we're as crazy as they think we are."

On Monday night, Olmert appeared to be making a pitch for removing the provision.

"President George W. Bush is the only leader and the United States is the only country that can be of enormous influence on what the Iranians will do," he said. "They are the only ones that can confront effectively the aggressiveness of the Iranians in their plans to build up nuclear capacity.

"I know that all of you, friends of the State of Israel, well-wishers of the State of Israel, all of you who are concerned about the security and the future of the State of Israel, understand the importance of strong American leadership addressing the Iranian threat, and I am sure you will not hamper or restrain that strong leadership unnecessarily."

Democrats said they were stunned by what they considered Israeli intervention in the U.S. political process.

They weren't the only ones. Officials close to Israeli Defense Minister Amir Peretz, who attended the event and gave a closed-door briefing, said he felt Olmert had crossed a line.

Peretz believes Israelis "should not interfere in a democratic process, especially in a country where there is such sensitivity about the democratic process," the officials said.

AIPAC was circumspect. The organization sees the Iran issue "differently" than does Olmert, Block said.

"We're interested in ensuring that Iran does not acquire nuclear weapons by ensuring that every sanction is used," he said.

To be sure, that was the tone set at the conference.

"Stiff sanctions and targeted divestments — these will be our focus as we work to keep the pressure on Iran," AIPAC Executive Director Howard Kohr said, speaking at the same session as Cheney.

The focus was a new sanctions act, co-sponsored by Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee, and Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.), its ranking member.

"Chairman Lantos' legislation prohibits Iranian-owned state banks from using the American banking system," Pelosi said in her remarks. "In terms of diplomacy, it proposes that we use our influence with Russia and China to encourage them to join the world community in opposing Iran's nuclear program."

Pelosi delivered her own limited broadside against the Iraq war, saying "any U.S. military engagement must be judged on three counts — whether it makes our country safer, our military stronger or the region more stable. The war in Iraq fails on all three scores."

That earned her light applause and a few boos.

In the end, however, delegates dropped whatever they felt about Iraq as they ascended the steps of Capitol Hill.

"We lobby on U.S. and Israeli issues," said Eric Zoller, 30, of West Orange, N.J. Touring his state's congressional offices in the Cannon Building for House members, he said Iraq was "no issue."

Benny Schechter, 51, a wholesaler from Coral Gables, Fla., noted Olmert's appeal to make Iraq an issue — but he rejected it.

"This is not an issue that we want to raise," Schechter said after meeting with Rep. Ciro Rodriguez (D-Texas).

Stopping Iran from getting nuclear weapons is the bottom line, Schechter said.

"If that happens, the war in Iraq means nothing," he said. "We have a limited time and we need to pick what issues are important." ■

Rachel Mauro and Gabe Ross in Washington contributed to this story.

Report: U.S. anti-Semitism falls, but ADL counsels warniness

By Ben Harris

NEW YORK (JTA) Anti-Defamation League officials were sounding a cautionary note following the release of the group's annual Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents showing that attacks against Jewish targets in the United States declined for a second straight year.

The audit, released month, reported 1,554 incidents against Jewish individuals or community institutions in the United States, a 12 percent drop from the 1,757 reported in 2005.

In 2006 there were 669 acts of vandalism, a slight increase from the previous year, while incidents of harassment or assault dropped substantially, from 1,140 to 885.

"The audit is just one measure of anti-Semitism in the United States," said ADL National Director Abraham Foxman. "There is also an onslaught of anti-Semitism out there in blogs, e-mails and Web sites and most significantly in conspiracy theories about alleged Jewish power which have even penetrated the mainstream that simply cannot be quantified."

Glen Lewy, the ADL's national chair, sounded a similar tone, noting that despite the decline, approximately four anti-Semitic attacks occur daily in the United States.

Among those was a shooting attack last summer on the Jewish federation offices in Seattle in which the federation's assistant director, Pamela Waechter, was killed and five people were wounded.

The alleged gunman was Naveed Afzal Haq, an American of Pakistani descent apparently motivated by anger over U.S. support for Israel.

Data in the audit is compiled from official crime statistics as well as information provided to the ADL's 30 regional offices around the country, and includes both criminal and non-criminal activity.

The highest number of attacks were reported in heavily Jewish districts in the Northeast, California and Florida, reflecting both the number of Jewish targets there and the increased reporting of anti-Semitic incidents in areas where the community is robust and the ADL enjoys a strong relationship with law enforcement.

New York had the most reported incidents with 284, followed by New Jersey with 244, California with 204 and Florida with 179 all of which were down from last year. Connecticut and Illinois saw significant increases, with the latter nearly doubling from 30 incidents to 56. Massachusetts saw a modest increase, from 93 to 96.

Two trends the league identifies as "ongoing factors" anti-Semitism in middle and high schools and on college campuses both declined in 2006.

ADL leaders seemed to downplay what appears to be good news.

Foxman told JTA that notwithstanding yearly fluctuations, the number of incidents appears to have "settled" around 1,500 over the past 15 years, despite the community being "at the maximum" in terms of awareness, commitment to reporting and investment in security.

"There's no trend established," Foxman said. "What we're concerned about, there is this leveling-off which is troubling, because we're not seeing a trend for the elimination of anti-Semitic incidents." ■

New study finds more U.S. Jews; the challenge is how to engage them

By Jacob Berkman

NEW YORK (JTA)—A new study gives fairly concrete evidence that the American Jewish population could be more than 1 million people larger than believed—but if so, it means efforts to engage them may have been less successful than the community realized.

The United Jewish Communities' National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01 was widely viewed as flawed. Still, the Jewish community held to the survey's estimate that there were 5.2 million American Jews.

But even using the same criteria as UJC did to define who is Jewish, it's more likely that there are 6 million to 6.4 million American Jews, according to a report released last month by a team of sociologists at the Steinhardt Social Research Institute at Brandeis University.

If a broader definition of Jewishness is used, the number could be as high as 7.4 million, according to Len Saxe, a Brandeis professor and head of the Steinhardt research center, who led the report.

Saxe's study suggests a larger, more diverse and less affiliated community than did the NJPS. The two surveys present very different narratives, Saxe said.

The difference, he says, can be seen in the opening chapters of Scott Shay's new book, "Getting our Groove Back: How to Energize American Jewry." Drawing on the NJPS results, the opening chapters paint American Jewry as a melting ice cube. But the U.S. Jewish population is actually growing, Saxe says.

That implies two very different motives for communal programing. One is alarmist: If the Jewish community is rapidly shrinking, then it must be saved. The other is optimistic: More potential Jews means more people to bring back to the core.

But the numbers suggest that the community, even if it is growing, has not been effective in certain areas—penetrating a much smaller portion of the Jewish population than previously thought—and it will take more programming to reach the underaffiliated. That also means significantly more philanthropic funding will be needed, Saxe said.

Philanthropists such as Michael Steinhardt, who funds Saxe's institute, are looking at the new numbers as a rallying call.

"What is of great concern is the fact that the institutional Jewish world is serving fewer people, less meaningfully than we thought before," Steinhardt told JTA before the report came out.

Another recent survey conducted by sociologist Ira Sheskin comes to a similar conclusion, but Saxe's study involved a "meta-analysis" of some three dozen government and private foundation surveys that query religion.

A painstaking process that involves not only analyzing the data but calibrating each survey to make sure they all use the same statistical language, the meta-analysis provides a more accurate portrait than the NJPS, Saxe said.

The surveys Saxe used generally are more extensive and thorough than the NJPS and, he said, are better at finding Jews by birth and self-identity. The NJPS also missed Jews on college campuses.

But the biggest discrepancy is that most of the calls for the NJPS surveys were made during early evening hours, when many Jews in their 20s and early 30s are not home because of work or social engagements, Saxe said.

When the survey did find Jews at home, there was a greater-than-average chance that they were Orthodox, who tend not to eat out and have familial obligations at a younger age, he said.

Especially in today's cell phone age, some young Jews may not even have land lines, giving surveyors virtually no chance of reaching them.

In all, the NJPS underestimated the total number of children by up to 30,000 per age cohort, according to the new study.

The NJPS estimates that 29 percent of Jewish children attend day school. But if there are a few hundred thousand more children than believed, the percentage attending day schools is correspondingly lower, Saxe said in his study.

The new report also represents a challenge to the federation system, which already knew it was collecting fewer dollars from fewer donors, but now must consider that it is actually receiving money from an even smaller percentage of its donor base.

If Saxe is correct, the undercounting of Jews in their 20s means that even successful programs, such as birthright israel, will have to redouble their efforts.

Steinhardt made his statement several days before Feb. 6, when the Adelson Family Charitable Foundation pledged $25 million a year to birthright for the next several years.

The growing wait list for birthright israel trips could provide anecdotal backing for Saxe's findings, according to Jeffrey Solomon, president of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies. In North America, there were more birthright applicants last year than young Jews having bar and bat mitzvahs.

For the organized Jewish world, the challenge is to reach the demographic of Jews between college entry and marriage, about an 11-year period.

"Those years are especially important to identity forming, but at the same time there is very little in Jewish life that targets that age group," Solomon said. "It is time for us to play a little catch-up and see this as an enormous opportunity."

But it's not time to panic, according to Sanford Cardin, executive director of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, a major funder of programs that target young Jews.

The challenge is the same whether there are 5.4 million American Jews or more than 6 million, Cardin said. While more philanthropic dollars are needed, it's up to the organized Jewish world to create excitement about Judaism that the will inspire people to return to the fold, and that's not a function only of the amount of programming.

"Jewish life is not about providing services and programs," Cardin said. "It is about attracting, engaging and infusing people with a way of living that they can choose to live.

"Ultimately this isn't about creating a pot of money. This is about sparking renewed interest and understanding of Jewish life by a large number of Jewish people," he said. "It's about reaching the individual. And the way that is going to work is more viral and through a network." ■

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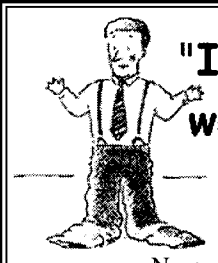

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Listening to the music of *Borat*

Sandor Slomovits, staff writer

In her opening monologue at the 2007 Academy Awards Show, host Ellen DeGeneres joked, "If there weren't blacks, Jews and gays, there would be no Oscars."

It's probably equally true that without those populations, along with the virulent prejudices they inspire in some Americans, there would be no movie *Borat.*

Now that the hoopla about the controversial comedy has died down a bit, now that its creator and star, Sacha Baron Cohen is no longer doing all his promotional interviews in character, now that some of the furor has faded about the film's politically incorrect (to put it mildly) content, not to mention its heavy reliance on anti-Semitic set pieces (despite that, *Borat*, it turns out, is very popular in Israel), now that the film has received an Oscar nomination for Best Adapted Screenplay (it didn't win), now that Baron Cohen has been nominated for a Golden Globe Award for best actor in a musical or comedy (he won), now that the movie is even out on DVD, I get to focus on an aspect of the film that has gone mostly unnoticed—the music.

I didn't go to see *Borat* when it came out last November. My wife did, and long familiar with my aversion to certain comedy genres, she reported, "You may not like it." A friend gave me a two-sentence review that also didn't inspire me to go. "Worst movie I ever saw. I laughed my a—off."

But then another friend told me that the soundtrack was great, that it consisted of a lot of traditional Balkan and Eastern European music. So, I listened, and agreed, (though most of it, as it happens, is not traditional, but modern music influenced by those styles) and decided I should go to see the movie.

I wanted to be sure I got my money's worth so I waited till the end of February and saw *Borat* at Briarwood on a Tuesday night for 50 cents. It was worth every bit of those two bits—and then some. Even though I didn't laugh my tochis off, well, not all of it anyway.

But, enough already. This is not a movie review, but a music column.

The *Borat* soundtrack CD contains most of the music from the film, though it does not include Harry Nilsson's version of the Fred Neil song "Everybody Talking At Me" from the 1960's classic, *Midnight Cowboy,* another film about a man wildly, albeit unconsciously, out of his element. It also does not have Steppenwolf's heavy metal version of "Born To Be Wild" which accompanies Borat as he heads out on his cross-country journey to find and marry the lust of his life, Pamela Anderson of Babe, uh… sorry, *Bay Watch*. Instead, there is a version of the song recorded by Fanfare Giocarlia, a terrific 12-piece Roma brass band from Romania. The song is given a different rhythm and the chorus, just the title repeated, is sung in Balkan inflected English. The verses are sung in Roma, Romanian or some unidentified, and possibly fake language.

The CD also, and I quote from the cover, "Contains bonus purchasing incentives, includings unseen footages from *Borat* moviefilm and romantics lovesong about my dead wife." In addition to the soundtrack, there are in fact two brief scenes from the movie, one of Baron Cohen "studying" with a humor coach, and the promotional video that accompanies the singing of the Kazakhstan National Anthem. The only "unseen footages" is a hilarious one of Borat grilling a supermarket manager about the contents of his cheese aisle.

The CD cover stays in character with the film, using the same fractured grammar that Borat used in the movie. It shows the full title, "Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan," and adds the following, "Stereophonic Musical Listenings That Have Been Origin In Moving Film." The effect is somewhat spoiled by the correct grammar of the "Parental Advisory – Explicit Content" notice in the lower right corner.

The CD also includes songs that are not in the movie such as the infamous set piece, "Throw the Jew Down the Well" that has been featured on Baron Cohen's Da Ali G show, and which was filmed live in a country western bar in Tucson, Arizona where Baron Cohen got the bar patrons to enthusiastically sing along on the chorus. It also includes "You Be My Wife," the "romantics lovesong about my dead wife," with fantastically feminist friendly lyrics—NOT. Baron Cohen wrote the words to both these songs, as well as to his fictional Kazakhstan National Anthem, which is side-splittingly funny—unless you happen to be from Kazakhstan. Baron Cohen's brother, Erran, a well-respected British trumpet player and composer wrote the well-crafted music for all of Sacha's lyrics. He manages to make musical sense of the humorous and deliberately uneven poetic meters, while at the same time creating ideal straight-man foils for Baron Cohen's words.

The CD opens with the wild vocalizations of Esma Redžepova, a well known, at least in her part of the world, Roma singer and songwriter from Yugoslavia. Her "Chaje Shukarije" is, like much of the music here, a compelling blend of the raw, unprocessed elements often heard in traditional folk music, and the more polished arrangements and studio wizardry of modern pop music. (By the way, she is suing Baron Cohen because she claims he used her song without permission. She will have to take a number. There are apparently a number of people who appear in the film who are also suing because they don't like the way they were portrayed.)

The soundtrack CD features the work of a number of other prominent Balkan and Eastern European composers, instrumentalists and singers and ranges from acoustic brass band to synthesized, sampled and electronic music. Names like Goran Bregović Stefan De La Barbulesti and German Popov, are all well known in Europe and the Balkans and deserve to be heard here more often as well. All of this music reflects the traditional roots, often Gypsy, of these musicians, but also shows that they have listened to, absorbed and incorporated modern pop and even rap, new age and world music influences.

If you liked the humor of the movie, you'll love Baron Cohen's songs, as well as the bits of dialog from the movie that he intersperses between the cuts.

If you hated the movie, there is still plenty of music here I think you will enjoy. And, if you don't want to listen repeatedly to Baron Cohen's shticks, you can do what I did. After buying the CD, I burned my own copy, editing it to include only the songs and instrumentals I wanted.

Oh, and you know how we Jews are about money. I bought the *Borat* soundtrack CD—used—at Encore Recordings for eight bucks.

Fifty cents for the movie, eight bucks for the music. Such a deal. ■

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from the Jewish News

Passover on the internet

Passover marks the birth of the Jews as a people and their emergence as a unique nation in history, devoted to God's will. It celebrates the liberation of the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt over 3,000 years ago, under the leadership of Moses.

This year Passover begins on Monday night, April 2.

The J Site - Jewish Education and Entertainment www.j.co.il has several entertaining features for Passover: Additional Passover resources and games on the J site include:

- Free Passover Clipart
- The Multilingual Hangman Game (English / Hebrew)
- The Multilingual Word Search Game (English / Hebrew / Russian)
- My Jewish Coloring Book (online / offline)
- Hebrew Passover Songs with Vowels (Nikud)

The J site has something for everyone, but if that is not enough, posted on the website are 162 links about Passover, ranging from laws and customs to games and recipes. Site languages include English, Hebrew, Russian, Spanish, French, Portugese, Italian and German. The web address is: www.jr.co.il/hotsites/j-hdaypa.htm

Deir Yassin from page 2

the dissident Jewish militia, the Irgun, had earlier tossed a bomb at Arab workers at a bus stop outside the refinery. The massacre of Jewish workers was revenged by a Haganah strike against civilians in the neighborhood where many Arab refinery workers lived.

On February 5, in Damascus, Palestinian military planners met and divided Palestine into four zones. Jewish kibbutzim in the Galilee and Samaria were to be attacked by the Arab Liberation Army, a force of Palestinians and volunteers from across the Middle East, under the command of former German Wehrmacht officer Fawzi al-Quwakji. Abdul Khader Husseini (The Mufti's cousin) would command the Mufti's forces in the Jerusalem district, while the Lydda area would report to Mufti loyalist Hassan Salame. Both Palestinian commanders were graduates of Nazi SS commando training. (Salame's son would go on to perpetrate the Munich Olympics massacre of Israeli athletes). Southern areas of Palestine were to be under an Egyptian commander.

Both Jews and Arabs quickly realized that the scattered Jewish enclaves earmarked for independence were especially vulnerable to being cut off from one another by merely closing the roads between them. Abdul Khader Husseini announced a plan to "strangle Jerusalem," to starve the city's Jews (16 percent of all Jews in the Palestinian region) into submission by cutting the highway linking Tel Aviv with Jerusalem. This road, Jerusalem's sole supply route, winds through a narrow gorge. Abdel Khader organized villagers on the hilltops to snipe at the Jewish trucks, sweep down the steep mountainsides and to ambush the Jewish food convoys. By late March 1948, the vital connecting road was cut. Jerusalem was under siege. No food got through. By April, the shortages had become critical. Severe rationing of water and food was in effect and Jerusalem's Jewish defenders feared food riots would sweep the city.

Suffering defeats at the hand of Palestinian militias, and facing an invasion by Arab armies the moment British troops left, the Haganah changed strategy. It went over to the offensive, beginning by uprooting Palestinian communities "unsystematically and without a general policy" in order to open internal lines of communication and deny bases to militias, explains historian Bennie Morris ("And Now for Some Facts" in *The New Republic*, May 8, 2006).

On April 6, the Haganah took al-Qastal, a town overlooking the highway as it enters Jerusalem. In intense fighting, lasting for days, control of the key village see-sawed back and forth. While it raged, on April 9, Irgun-Lehi forces on their own initiative attacked Deir Yassin, two kilometers south of al-Kastel. In the course of and after that battle, Jewish fighters brutally killed over 100 non-combatant civilians. Details of the massacre, and various accounts of the levels of provocation, military necessity and authority justifying the action, are fairly delineated in the Wikipedia article on the massacre.

Palestine Radio broadcast exaggerated and fabricated details of the Deir Yassin massacre. Expecting to rouse Arab states to indignation and therefore "come to liberate Palestine from the Jews," editor Hazem Nusseibeh and Hussein Khalidi of the Arab Higher Committee miscalculated. Their broadcasts sowed panic among Palestinians.

"This was our biggest mistake," Hassan Nusseibeh, former Palestine Broadcasting Service Arabic News editor, told BBC documentary filmmakers. "We did not realize how our people would react. As soon as they heard that women had been raped at Deir Yassin, Palestinians fled in terror [*The Fifty Years' War: Israel and the Arabs* (1998)].

On April 13, Arab village militia fighters wreaked revenge for Deir Yassin. Ambushing a medical convoy to Hadassah Hospital, the militiamen massacred 78 Jewish nurses and doctors, dousing with gasoline and burning alive the bleeding wounded.

A Deir Yassin "Wheels of Justice Tour," sponsored by Deir Yassin Remembered organization, has already presented at over 4,000 venues in 48 states during the past four years, according to their web site. About half of their appearances have been at high schools, colleges and universities where they tell a version of the Deir Yassin that carefully avoids any mention of the Mufti, the Palestinian SS commandos, their siege to "strangle Jerusalem," the desperate fight to open the road to Jerusalem, or the massacre of Hadassah medical personnel. Henry Herskovitz, a retired mechanical engineer on the board of directors of Der Yassin Remembered, has invited Daniel McGowan, its founder, to join him April 7 in picketing Beth Israel Congregation, where he weekly taunts families arriving for Sabbath services.

Wikipedia was used a source for this article. Also, thanks to Dan Cutler for the Einstein quotes. View Cutler's project on Albert Einstein's Zionism by following the link on www.dancutlermedicalart.com ■

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April 2007

Sunday 1

Reading Hebrew through the Prayer Book–for Women: Chabad. An in-depth study into the prayer book, an overview of the weekly Torah reading, with Jewish philosophy. 9:30 a.m. at Chabad House. *Every Sunday.*

Schmooze: Jewish Cultural Society. "Historical Evidence of the Flood." UM professor Steven Segal shares his research about whether this biblical event actually happened. 10 a.m.–noon at the JCC.

Tanya–Jewish Mysticism: Chabad. Delve into the basic text of Chassidism and open your eyes to the beauty of Judaism. 10:30 a.m. at Chabad House. *Every Sunday.*

Evening Minyan: BIC. 7:30 p.m.

Rabbi's Class #2: TBE. Kohelet (Ecclesiastes), Job and Maimonides. 7:45 p.m.

Jewish Concepts–for Women: Chabad. Learning the deeper meanings to the Jewish way of life. 8 p.m. at Chabad House. *Every Sunday.*

Monday 2

Shaharit Minyan and Siyyum: BIC. Minyan followed by completion of study of a section of traditional text to provide a "*seudat mitzvah*," a celebratory meal following completion of a commandment. Conducted by Rabbi Dobrusin. Light *hametz* breakfast served. Permissible even for those who would otherwise fast, such as the first born in recognition of Erev Pesach, a "*taanit bechorot*." 7–8 a.m. at Garfunkel Schteingart Activity Center, 2010 Washtenaw Ave.

SPICE of LIFE: JCC Seniors. Fitness Fun with Maria Farquhar, 11 a.m.–noon, $4/session or $10/3 sessions; $3 Buffet of Dairy Delights, noon; Writing Group; express yourself through personal recollections, poetry and fiction. No previous writing experience required, 1–2:30 p.m. *Every Monday.*

Mincha Service: BIC. 6 p.m.

Evening Passover Services: AAOM: 7:40 p.m. at UM Hillel.

First Night Seder: Chabad. A traditional seder, full of Chasidic and mystical insights into the hagaddah. Festive homemade meal with new and old friends. 8 p.m. at Chabad. $30/community members; $10/newly Americans; $18/students Reservations required. Reserve at www.jewmich.com, email info@jewmich.com, or call 995-3276.

Tuesday 3

Morning Passover Services: AAOM. Held at UM Hillel. Call 662-5805 for time.

Morning Passover Services: BIC. 7:30 a.m.

SPICE of LIFE: JCC Seniors. Arts and Crafts–bring something that you are working on or participate in a group project. Coffee and noshes provided, 10:30–noon; Mah Jongg, Noon–2:30 p.m. *Every Tuesday*.

Opera Workshop Outing: JFS. Watch a performance of a 19th century opera workshop at the UM McIntosh Theatre. $6/roundtrip fare on JFS CareVan, if needed. Contact Nina Dmitrieva at nina@jfsannarbor.org or 769-0209.

Evening Passover Services: BIC. Mincha services at 6 p.m.

Second Night Seder: TBE. 6 p.m.

Second Night Seder: Jewish Cultural Society. Secular Humanistic seder. Dairy/veggie potluck provided by B'nai Mitzvah families. Beverages and wine provided. Donations requested for adult guests. Children welcome. 6:30–8 p.m. at the JCC.

Evening Passover Services: AAOM: 7:40 p.m. at UM Hillel.

Second Night Seder: Chabad. A traditional seder, full of inspiring Chasidic and mystical insights into the hagaddah. Festive homemade meal. 8 p.m. at Chabad. $30/community members; $10/newly Americans; $18/students. Reservations required. Reserve at www.jewmich.com, email info@jewmich.com, or call 995-3276.

Second Night Seder: GAP. Join the Jewish Graduates and Professionals Group for a first night seder. RSVP for directions to Joel's house, a 15 minute drive from UM Hillel. Fill a taxi and Hillel will pay. Full kosher dinner. Check www.sitemaker.umich.edu/gap/home for more information.

Wednesday 4

Morning Passover Services: AAOM. Held at UM Hillel. Call 662-5805 for time.

Morning Passover Services: BIC. 9:30 a.m.

Evening Passover Services: BIC. 6 p.m.

Meditation: TBE. 7:30 p.m.

Thursday 5

Passover Vacation Fun Day: JCC–Youth Department. Take a high velocity rocket ship to the Red Planet with the space explorers at the U-M Natural History Museum. For JCC members only. A Passover lunch will be provided. 8 a.m.–4 p.m. with extended care from 4–6 p.m. at the JCC. $35/program; $33/additional siblings; $8/extended care per child. Contact Craig Pollack at 971-0990 or email craigpollack@jccfed.org.

Prayer, Weekly Torah Reading and Jewish Philosophy–for Women: Chabad. 9 a.m. at the JCC. *Every Thursday.*

SPICE of LIFE: JCC Seniors. Fitness Fun with Maria Farquhar, 10–noon, $4 or 3/$10; Current Events with Heather Donbey. 11 a.m.–noon; $3 Kosher Lunch, noon; Guest Presentations (varied), 1 p.m. at the JCC.

Guest Presentation: JCC Seniors. "Shalom Y'All" student presentation. Students from Sol Drachler Program share stories and photos of their visit to Jews in the deep South. 1 p.m. at the JCC.

Senior Seder: JCC Older Adult Programs and Jewish Family Services. Join the JCC and JFS for a community-wide traditional seder for older adults and their families. $15/meal, transportation available. 4–6 p.m. at the JCC. RSVP by 3/22 to Abbie Lawrence Jacobson at 769-0209.

English as a Second Language Evening Classes: JFS. Ongoing Thursday evenings 6–9 p.m. at Jewish Family Services, 625 State Circle Drive. Contact Jewish Family Services at 769-0209 or email info@jfsannarbor.org for more information.

Talmud Study Group–Jewish Civil Law: Chabad. Sharpen your wits and knowledge of the Jewish legal system by following the intriguing discussions in the Talmud. The Talmud is a composite of practical law, logical argumentation and moral teachings. Study of the original Talmud tractate Bava Metziah chapter 6. 8 p.m. *Every Thursday.*

Friday 6

Passover Vacation Fun Day: JCC–Youth Department. Dominos Farms Petting Zoo and Hayride for JCC members/Hebrew Day School students only. Take a seat on a hay bale in the barn and watch the newest members of the barnyard strut their stuff, visit the petting area, and take an old-fashioned hayride. Passover lunch will be provided. 8 a.m.–4 p.m. with extended care from 4–6 p.m. at the JCC. $35/program; $33/additional siblings; $8/extended care per child. Contact Craig Pollack at 971-0990 or email craigpollack@jccfed.org.

Weekly Yiddish-speaking Group: JCC Seniors. Meets at a private home every week except when monthly group meets at JCC. 1:30–3 p.m. Call 971-0990.

First Friday Shabbat: Observance and Naming Ceremony: Jewish Cultural Society. Humanistic service and potluck veggie dinner. Naming ceremony for second grade class. 6:30–8:30 p.m. at the JCC. For information, visit www.jewishculturalsociety.org or phone 975-9872.

Friday evening services: *See listing at the end of the calendar.*

Saturday 7

Day Trip for Older Adults: JFS. Visit the Flint Institute for the Arts. $11.50/museum admission and transportation. Pickup at 9:30 a.m. Contact Nina Dmitrieva at nina@jfsannarbor.org or 769-0209 for information.

Older Adult Outing: JFS. Outing to hear Chopin's Piano works at Britton Recital Hall. $6/roundtrip transportation on JFS CareVan, if needed. Contact Nina Dmitrieva at nina@jfsannarbor.org or 769-0209 for information.

Mystical Insights to the Torah—for Women: Chabad. Learn more about the mystical dimensions of the Torah. 1 hour before sundown at Chabad House. *Every Saturday.*

Laws of Shabbat–Jewish Ethics: Chabad. Study group code of law for Shabbat, and study of Jewish Ethics, 1/2 hour before sundown at Chabad House. *Every Saturday.*

Shabbat services*: See listing at the end of the calendar.*

Sunday 8

Reading Hebrew through the Prayer Book–for Women: Chabad. An in-depth study into the prayer book, an overview of the weekly Torah reading, with Jewish philosophy. 9:30 a.m. at Chabad House. *Every Sunday.*

Tanya–Jewish Mysticism: Chabad. Delve into the basic text of Chassidism and open your eyes to the beauty of Judaism. 10:30 a.m. at Chabad House. *Every Sunday.*

Services: BIC. Mincha Maariv service. 7:30 p.m.

Evening Passover Services: AAOM: 7:45 p.m. at UM Hillel.

Jewish Concepts–for Women: Chabad. Learning the deeper meanings to the Jewish way of life. 8 p.m. at Chabad House. *Every Sunday.*

Monday 9

Morning Passover Services: AAOM. Held at UM Hillel. Call 662-5805 for time.

Morning Passover Services: BIC. 9:30 a.m.

Passover Yiskor Service and Lunch: TBE. 11 a.m.

SPICE of LIFE: JCC Seniors. Fitness Fun with Maria Farquhar, 11 a.m.–noon, $4/session or $10/3 sessions; $3 Buffet of Dairy Delights, noon; Writing Group; express yourself through personal recollections, poetry and fiction. No previous writing experience required, 1–2:30 p.m. *Every Monday.*

Jewish Learning Institute (JLI): Chabad. A chance to explore modern cases actually brought before the courts of Jewish law and to examine the reasoning behind the decisions. You get to be the judge as you take the "driver's seat" to steer your way through Jewish law. 7:30–9 p.m. at the JCC.

Evening Passover Services: BIC. 7:30 p.m. Passover Mincha service, no Maariv.

Evening Passover Services: AAOM: 7:45 p.m. at UM Hillel.

Tuesday 10

Morning Passover Services: AAOM. Held at UM Hillel. Call 662-5805 for time.

Morning Passover Services: BIC. Passover Service at 9:30 a.m. (with Yizkor at approximately 11:00 a.m.)

SPICE of LIFE: JCC Seniors. Arts and Crafts–bring something that you are working on or participate in a group project. Today's project: make your own greeting cards. Bring paper, ribbons and other materials. Coffee and noshes provided, 10:30–noon; Ma Jongg, Noon–2:30 p.m. *Every Tuesday*.

Break Passover: TNT of TBE. Break Passover with the 'Twenties and Thirties" Group at 7 p.m. at Pizza House.

Evening Entertainment Excursion: JCC–Older Adult Programs. Enjoy an evening of music with a trip to see the University Choir and Orpheus Singers at the UM's Hill Auditorium. $6 for transportation. 7:15 p.m. Meet at the JCC. RSVP by 4/1 to Laurie Wechter at 971-0990 or Abbie Lawrence Jacobson at 769-0209.

Evening Passover Services: BIC. 7:30 p.m. Passover Mincha service, no Maariv.

Moshiach's Dinner: Chabad. Festive homemade meal with new and old friends at the end of Passover. 8 p.m. at Chabad. $12/community members; $5/newly Americans; $8/students. Reservations required. Reserve at www.jewmich.com, email info@jewmich.com, or call 995-3276.

Wednesday 11

Passover Vacation Fun Day: JCC–Youth Department. Trip to the Rainbow Creation Ceramics Studio for JCC members only. Choose an unfinished piece of pottery and let your artistic abilities loose. Paint and glaze your own work of art and your masterpiece will be fired in the kiln and ready in a week. Bring a dairy lunch. 8 a.m.–4 p.m. with extended care from 4–6 p.m. at the JCC. $35/program; $33/additional siblings; $8/extended care per child. Contact Craig Pollack at 971-0990 or email craigpollack@jccfed.org.

Concert Outing for Older Adults: JFS. Hear Pershin's Own Brass Quintet Band at Britton Recital Hall. 8 p.m. $6/transportation on JFS CareVan, if needed. Contact Nina Dmitrieva at nina@jfsannarbor.org or 769-0209 for information.

Thursday 12

Passover Vacation Fun Day: JCC–Youth Department. Enjoy Carnival Time at the JCC (for JCC members only). Play games along the carnival boardwalk, compete in relay races, break a piñata, watch a movie on the giant screen with popcorn included and more. Bring a dairy lunch. 8 a.m.–4 p.m. with extended care from 4–6 p.m. at the JCC. $35/program; $33/additional siblings; $8/extended care per child. Contact Craig Pollack at 971-0990 or email craigpollack@jccfed.org.

Prayer, Weekly Torah reading and Jewish Philosophy–for Women: Chabad. 9 a.m. at the JCC. *Every Thursday.*

SPICE of LIFE: JCC Seniors. Fitness Fun with Maria Farquhar, 10–noon, $4 or 3/$10; Current Events with Heather Donbey. 11 a.m.–noon; $3 Kosher Lunch, noon; Guest Presentations (varied), 1 p.m. at the JCC.

Civic Life and Community Engagement Series: JCC–Older Adult Programs. Guest presenter Marti Bombyk, L.M.S.W., PhD, will speak on "Civic Engagement in the Neighborhood: Building Community from the Ground Up." Part of a new series aligned with Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti Reads program and University of Michigan Theme Semester. 1 p.m. at the JCC. For information, contact Laurie Wechter at 971-0990 or Abbie Lawrence Jacobson at 769-0209.

Concert Outing for Older Adults: JFS. Hear a Piano Recital with a guest artist at Britton Recital Hall. 8 p.m. $6/transportation on JFS CareVan, if needed. Contact Nina Dmitrieva at nina@jfsannarbor.org or 769-0209 for information.

Talmud Study Group–Jewish Civil Law: Chabad. Sharpen your wits and knowledge of the Jewish legal system by following the intriguing discussions in the Talmud. The Talmud is a composite of practical law, logical argumentation and moral teachings. Study of the original Talmud tractate Bava Metziah chapter 6. 8 p.m. *Every Thursday.*

Friday 13

Passover Vacation Fun Day: JCC–Youth Department. Toledo Zoo Trip for JCC members only. Bring a dairy lunch. 8 a.m.–4 p.m. with extended care from 4–6 p.m. at the JCC. $35/program; $33/additional siblings; $8/extended care per child. Contact Craig Pollack at 971-0990 or email craigpollack@jccfed.org.

Matinee Musicale: JCC–Older Adult Programs. Enjoy coffee, cake and conversation plus a musical performance by Arie Lipsky and Friends from the Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra. 1:30–3:30 p.m. at the JCC. $7/person. For information, contact Laurie Wechter at laurie@jfsannarbor.org or call 971-0990 or Abbie Lawrence Jacobson at abbie@jfsAnnarbor.org or call 769-0209.

Yiddish Movie Day: JCC Seniors. Monthly Yiddish-speaking group meets the second Friday of each month with a planned program of Yiddish films. Today's Yiddish film, with Czech subtitles, is *The Shop on Main Street.* 1:30 p.m. at the JCC in the Newman Room. Call 971-0990 for information.

Shabbat Services: TBE. Tot Shabbat Service at 5:30 p.m.; Tot Shabbat dinner at 6 p.m.; Shira at 6:30 p.m.; Family Service at 7 p.m.; Chapel service at 8 p.m.

Friday evening services: *See listing at the end of the calendar.*

Saturday 14

Tot Shabbat: BIC. Led by Peretz Hirshbein fol-

lowed by special Tot Kiddush for parents and children 3–6 years old. 11 a.m. at Beth Israel.

Mystical Insights to the Torah–for Women: Chabad. Learn more about the mystical dimensions of the Torah: Chabad. 1 hour before sundown at Chabad House. *Every Saturday.*

Laws of Shabbat–Jewish Ethics: Chabad. Study group code of law for Shabbat, and study of Jewish Ethics, 1/2 hour before sundown at Chabad House. *Every Saturday.*

Shabbat services: *See listing at the end of the calendar.*

Sunday 15

Reading Hebrew through the Prayer Book–for Women: Chabad. An in-depth study into the prayer book, an overview of the weekly Torah reading, with Jewish philosophy. 9:30 a.m. at Chabad House. *Every Sunday.*

Tanya–Jewish Mysticism: Chabad. Delve into the basic text of Chassidism and open your eyes to the beauty of Judaism. 10:30 a.m. at Chabad House. *Every Sunday.*

Hike: GAP. Hike along the Huron River and enjoy the warmer weather. Meet at Bandemer parking lot off N. Main Street on Lakeshore Drive, just before the M-14 on-ramp. 3–5 p.m.

Holocaust Remembrance Day Observance: Jewish Federation. Yom Hashoah observance in conjunction with University Musical Society with a concert featuring Jerusalem String Quartet. Ceremony begins at 3 p.m. in Raoul Wallenberg Square outside UM Alumni Center (or in the Center's Founder's Room in case or inclement weather). Concert in Rackham Auditorium at 4 p.m. Discounted tickets offered for $30.60 and can be purchased online at www.jewishannarbor.org/jerusalemstringquartet.

Concert Outing for Older Adults: JFS. Hear the Jerusalem String Quartet at the UM's Hill Auditorium. 4 p.m. Limited number of free and subsidized tickets available through JFS. $6/transportation on JFS CareVan, if needed. Contact Nina Dmitrieva at nina@jfsannarbor.org or 769-0209 for information.

Minyan with Observance of Yom Hashoah. BIC. Minyan at 7:30 p.m. followed by discussion of the holocaust-themed novel *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* by John Boyne as part of Beth Israel Reads program. 8:15 p.m.

Rabbi's Class #3: TBE. Kohelet (Ecclesiastes), Job and Maimonides. 7:45 p.m.

Concert Outing for Older Adults: JFS. Hear a Cabaret Studio Recital at the UM Walgreen and Drama Center at 8 p.m. $6/transportation on JFS CareVan, if needed. Contact Nina Dmitrieva at nina@jfsannarbor.org or 769-0209 for information.

Jewish Concepts–for Women: Chabad. Learning the deeper meanings to the Jewish way of life. 8 p.m. at Chabad House. *Every Sunday.*

Monday 16

SPICE of LIFE: JCC Seniors. Fitness Fun with Maria Farquhar, 11 a.m.–noon, $4/session or $10/3 sessions; $3 Buffet of Dairy Delights, noon; Writing Group; express yourself through personal recollections, poetry and fiction. No previous writing experience required, 1–2:30 p.m. *Every Monday.*

"**From Israel With a Smile:" JFS.** Outing to the Detroit area for a Russian performance featuring Yan Levinson at 7:30 p.m.. $25/tickets with a modest fee for transportation. Contact Nina Dmitrieva at nina@jfsannarbor.org or 769-0209 for information.

Jewish Learning Institute (JLI): Chabad. *See 4/9.* 7:30–9 p.m. at the JCC.

Tuesday 17

SPICE of LIFE: JCC Seniors. Arts and Crafts–bring something that you are working on or participate in a group project. Coffee and noshes provided, 10:30–noon; Mah Jongg, Noon–2:30 p.m. *Every Tuesday.*

Movie Tuesday: TBE. 1–3 p.m.

Evening Entertainment Excursion: JCC–Older Adult Programs. Enjoy an evening of music with a trip to see the University Symphony Orchestra at the UM's Hill Auditorium. $6 for transportation. 7:15 p.m. Meet at the JCC. RSVP by 4/8 to Laurie Wechter at 971-0990 or Abbie Lawrence Jacobson at 769-0209.

Weekly Torah Portion—for Women: Chabad. Reading the Bible may be easy, but understanding it is no simple matter. Study the text in the original, together with the classical commentaries. 8:30 p.m. at Chabad House. *Every Tuesday.*

Topics in Jewish Law: AAOM. Rabbi Rod Glogower presents different topics each week (except during vacation) using texts from Tanach, Talmud and rabbinic literature. English translations of texts provided. Discussions in areas of law, philosophy and theology. 8 p.m. at UM Hillel. For information, call 662-5805.

Wednesday 18

Lunch and Laugh Series: BIC. Led by Rabbi Dobrusin. A look at some of the famous Jewish comedians of the past and how we can find humor in our own Jewish experiences. Bring a sack lunch. Drinks and dessert will be provided. Noon–1:15 p.m.

Israeli Dancing: JCC. Join your friends for a night of Israeli dancing at the JCC with veteran instructor Tom Starks. 7–9 p.m. $5/person.

Adult Biblical Hebrew #1: TBE. First session of six-week spring term class. 6:30 p.m.

Meditation: TBE. 7:30 p.m.

Thursday 19

Prayer, Weekly Torah reading and Jewish Philosophy–for Women: Chabad. 9 a.m. at the JCC. *Every Thursday.*

SPICE of LIFE: JCC Seniors. Fitness Fun with Maria Farquhar, 10–noon, $4 or 3/$10; Current Events with Heather Donbey. 11 a.m.–noon; $3 Kosher Lunch, noon; Guest Presentations (varied), 1 p.m. at the JCC.

Civic Life and Community Engagement Series: JCC–Older Adult Program. Guest presenter Elizabeth Solomon will speak on "Making Volunteerism Meaningful." Part of a new series aligned with Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti Reads program and University of Michigan Theme Semester. 1 p.m. at the JCC. For information, contact Laurie Wechter at 971-0990 or Abbie Lawrence Jacobson at 769-0209.

Adult Hebrew #1: TBE. First session of six-week spring term class. 6:30 p.m.

Talmud Study Group–Jewish Civil Law: Chabad. Sharpen your wits and knowledge of the Jewish legal system by following the intriguing discussions in the Talmud. The Talmud is a composite of practical law, logical argumentation and moral teachings. Study of the original Talmud tractate Bava Metziah chapter 6. 8 p.m. *Every Thursday.*

Holocaust Memorial Lecture: Jewish Historical Society of Michigan. Harvard Professor Susan Rubin Suleiman, Jewish Studies Program, Michigan State University. For more information, call (517) 432-3493.

Friday 20

Weekly Yiddish-speaking Group: JCC Seniors. Meets at a private home every week except when monthly group meets at JCC. 1:30–3 p.m. Call 971-0990.

Shabbat Dinner: JCC–Early Childhood Center. Families with young children from birth to age five will welcome in Shabbat with dinner, sing-a-long and special presentation by Giraffe Room children. There will be also be an opportunity to participate in popular fundraising event to create a ceramic tile to add to wall of tiles in ECC's Monkey Room. 6–7:30 p.m. at the JCC. $10/adults; $5/children 2 years and up. RSVP by 4/16 to the ECC at 971-0990.

Kabbalat Shabbat Service and Yom Ha'Atzmaut Dinner: TBE. 6 p.m.

Friday evening services: *See listing at the end of the calendar.*

Saturday 21

Mystical Insights to the Torah—for Women: Chabad. Learn more about the mystical dimensions of the Torah: Chabad. 1 hour before sundown at Chabad House. *Every Saturday.*

continued on page 36

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Calendar

Laws of Shabbat–Jewish Ethics: Chabad. Study group code of law for Shabbat, and study of Jewish Ethics, 1/2 hour before sundown at Chabad House. *Every Saturday.*

Kol Halev: TBE. Adult choir Cabaret. 6 p.m.

Bowling Fundraiser: ORT. An evening of dinner, bowling and fun at Colonial Lanes. Dinner at 6 p.m. Bowling begins at 7 p.m. No skill necessary. Prizes and silent auction of dinner certificates. For information, contact Barbara Goodsitt at 662-6671 or b.goodsitt@comcast.net or email Barbara Riemer at briemer@emich.edu.

Shabbat services: *See listing at the end of the calendar.*

Sunday 22

Reading Hebrew through the Prayer Book–for Women: Chabad. An in-depth study into the prayer book, an overview of the weekly Torah reading, with Jewish philosophy. 9:30 a.m. at Chabad House. *Every Sunday.*

Sunday Fun: JCC and HDS. Children ages 2 and up and their parents will join percussionist and Hebrew teacher Aron Kaufman for songs, Hebrew and Israeli Independence Day fun. 10–11 a.m. at the JCC. RSVP to sundayfun@hdsaa.org. For more information, call HDS at 971-4633.

Tanya–Jewish Mysticism: Chabad. Delve into the basic text of Chassidism and open your eyes to the beauty of Judaism. 10:30 a.m. at Chabad House. *Every Sunday.*

Chaverim B'Shirim Concert: JCC. Chaverim B'Shirim will celebrate the life and work of Irving Berlin, considered to be one of the most famous and important songwriters of the 20th Century. Excerpts from *Call Me Madam* and *Annie Get Your Gun.* $5/suggested donation. 2 p.m. at the JCC. RSVP to 971-0990.

Bat Mitzvah Cruise: JFS. Set sail for the JFS Bat Mitzvah Cruise, a celebration and commemoration of the 13-year history of providing human services to the community and serving as "Your Family in the Community." Cruise-inspired activities, food and fun for all ages. 5–8 p.m. Travis Pointe Country Club. Call 769-0209 or contact carol@jfsannarbor.org for more information or register online at www.jfsannarbor.org/Bat_Mitzvah_Cruise_reg.htm

Yom Hashoah Service: TBE. 6:30–7:30 p.m.

Concert Outing for Older Adults: JFS. Hear a Faculty Recital featuring Diana Garnet on Bass at Britton Recital Hall. 8 p.m. $6/transportation on JFS CareVan, if needed. Contact Nina Dmitrieva at nina@jfsannarbor.org or 769-0209 for information.

Jewish Concepts–for Women: Chabad. Learning the deeper meanings to the Jewish way of life. 8 p.m. at Chabad House. *Every Sunday.*

Monday 23

Photography exhibit: Moonwinks Cafe. As part of the week-long opening celebration, Moonwinks Cafe will host an exhibit of photos by Nancy Margolis from her trip to China. Proceeds from photo sales will be donated to the JCC Playground Campaign. For info about the opening reception, call 662-5580. 5151 Plymouth Rd.

Grandparent's Day: HDS. Rosh Chodesh Iyar and Yom HaAtzmaut celebration with Hebrew Day School students, parents, and grandparents. For information, call HDS at 971-4633.

SPICE of LIFE: JCC Seniors. Fitness Fun with Maria Farquhar, 11 a.m.–noon, $4/session or $10/3 sessions; $3 Buffet of Dairy Delights, noon; Writing Group; express yourself through personal recollections, poetry and fiction. No previous writing experience required, 1–2:30 p.m. *Every Monday.*

Jewish Learning Institute (JLI): Chabad: 7:30–9 p.m. at the JCC. *See 4/9*

Tuesday 24

SPICE of LIFE: JCC Seniors. Arts and Crafts–bring something that you are working on or participate in a group project. Coffee and noshes provided, 10:30–noon; Mah Jongg, Noon–2:30 p.m. *Every Tuesday.*

"The Psychology of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict:" TBE. Talk by Aaron Ahuvia at 7:30 p.m.

Topics in Jewish Law: AAOM. Rabbi Rod Glogower presents different topics each week (except during vacation) using texts from Tanach, Talmud and rabbinic literature. English translations of texts provided. Discussions in areas of law, philosophy and theology. 8 p.m. at UM Hillel. For information, call 662-5805.

Weekly Torah Portion—for Women: Chabad. Reading the Bible may be easy, but understanding it is no simple matter. Study the text in the original, together with the classical commentaries. 8:30 p.m. at Chabad House. *Every Tuesday.*

Wednesday 25

Meditation: TBE. 7:30 p.m.

Thursday 26

Prayer, Weekly Torah reading and Jewish Philosophy–for women: Chabad. 9 a.m. at the JCC. *Every Thursday.*

SPICE of LIFE: JCC Seniors. Fitness Fun with Maria Farquhar, 10–noon, $4 or 3/$10; Current Events with Heather Donbey. 11 a.m.–noon; $3 Kosher Lunch, noon; Guest Presentations (varied), 1 p.m. at the JCC.

Guest Presentation: JCC Seniors. Dr. Judith Laikin Elkin will present "Argentine Jews/Jewish Argentines." Who are the Argentine Jews? How do Jews accommodate to life in the southern hemisphere? How are they similar to North American Jews and how do they differ? This short talk will be followed by audience participation. 1–2:30 p.m. at the JCC.

Family Literacy Night: JCC–ECC and HDS. For families with children pre-school through 2nd grade. Join in a variety of literacy activities and games based on Jewish stories. A pizza dinner will be served and a guest storyteller will be there to share stories. 6–8 p.m. at the JCC. $15/family. RSVP by 4/23 to the ECC at 971-0990.

Talmud Study Group–Jewish Civil Law: Chabad. Sharpen your wits and knowledge of the Jewish legal system by following the intriguing discussions in the Talmud. The Talmud is a composite of practical law, logical argumentation and moral teachings. Study of the original Talmud tractate Bava Metziah chapter 6–8 p.m. *Every Thursday.*

Friday 27

Weekly Yiddish-speaking Group: JCC Seniors. Meets at a private home every week except when monthly group meets at JCC. 1:30–3 p.m. Call 971-0990.

Friday evening services: *See listing at the end of the calendar.*

Saturday 28

Mitzvah Day: TBE.

Teen Shabbat and Kids' Kiddush: BIC. Teens take over the entire service from reading Torah to leading prayers plus delivering D'Var Torah. Kiddush is planned and prepared by 5th and 6th graders. 9:30 a.m.

Mystical Insights to the Torah—for Women: Chabad. Learn more about the mystical dimensions of the Torah: Chabad. 1 hour before sundown at Chabad House. *Every Saturday.*

Laws of Shabbat–Jewish Ethics: Chabad. Study group code of law for Shabbat, and study of Jewish Ethics, 1/2 hour before sundown at Chabad House. *Every Saturday.*

Salsa Bar Night: GAP. Meet at 9 p.m. and learn salsa with lessons beginning at 9:30 p.m. sharp followed by open dancing. Papi Os, 2275 Ellsworth at Hewitt in Ypsilanti. $8/cover after 10 p.m.

Shabbat services: *See listing at the end of the calendar.*

Sunday 29

State Historic Marker dedication: Jewish Historical Society of Michigan. Join the celebration of a new Michigan Historic Marker com-

memorating the first Jewish settler in Detroit, fur trader Chapman Abraham, and the participation of Michigan Jews in the Civil War. 2 p.m. at Tri-Centennial Park and Harbor at the Detroit Riverfront. Bus transportation available in Detroit area. For more info, call (248) 432-5517.

Reading Hebrew through the Prayer Book–for women: Chabad. An in-depth study into the prayer book, an overview of the weekly Torah reading, with Jewish philosophy. 9:30 a.m. at Chabad House. *Every Sunday.*

Tanya–Jewish Mysticism: Chabad. Delve into the basic text of Chassidism and open your eyes to the beauty of Judaism. 10:30 a.m. at Chabad House. *Every Sunday.*

Celebrate Israel 3: The Jewish community will gather to celebrate the 59th anniversary of the State of Israel. This year's theme is Kikar Safra: A Celebration of Jewish Music and Art in Honor of Israel Independence Day. Live music from local groups, art displays, and a youth art project. Israeli-inspired food will be available for purchase. 2–6 p.m. at EMU's Student Center, 900 Oakwood Street in Ypsilanti.

Women's Rosh Chodesh. TBE: 6:30 p.m.

Youth Choir Concert and Reception: TBE. 7 p.m.

Jewish Concepts–for Women: Chabad. Learning the deeper meanings to the Jewish way of life. 8 p.m. at Chabad House. *Every Sunday.*

Torah Benefit Concert: Pardes Hannah 7 p.m. Kerrytown Concert House, 415 N. 4th Ave. Call 769-2999 for tickets.

Monday 30

SPICE of LIFE: JCC Seniors. Fitness Fun with Maria Farquhar, 11 a.m.–noon, $4/session or $10/3 sessions; $3 Buffet of Dairy Delights, noon; Writing Group; express yourself through personal recollections, poetry and fiction. No previous writing experience required, 1–2:30 p.m. *Every Monday.*

Jewish Learning Institute (JLI): Chabad: 7:30–9 p.m. at the JCC. *See 4/9*

Weekly Friday night Shabbat services

Shabbat Services: AAOM. U-M Hillel. Home hospitality available for Shabbat meals. Call 662-5805 in advance.

Shabbat Service: BIC. 6 p.m.

Shabbat Service: TBE. Weekly services at 8 p.m. The second week of the month the Friday Services schedule changes to include: 5:30 p.m. Tot Shabbat followed by Tot Dinner at 6 p.m.; Shira song session at 6:30 p.m.; Family Service at 7 p.m. and Chapel Minyan at 8 p.m.

Shabbat Service: Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Havurah. 6:15 PM at the JCC the last Friday of each month. Musical Shabbat service followed by vegetarian potluck. Tot Shabbat with optional kid's pizza dinner at 6:00 PM. All are welcome to attend. For information, call 913-9705, email info@aarecon.org or visit www.aarecon.org.

Shabbat Service: Chabad House. Begins at candle-lighting time. Home hospitality available for Shabbat meals and Jewish holidays; call 995-3276 in advance.

Weekly Shabbat services and classes

Shabbat Services: AAOM. Morning service, 9:30 a.m. Evening service, 35 minutes before sunset. U–M Hillel. Call 662-5805 for information. Mincha/Maariv with Seudah Shlisheet and Dvor Torah every week at UM Hillel. Torah topics and a bite to eat. Discussions led by Rabbi Rod Glogower and other local scholars.

Shabbat Services: BIC. 9:30 a.m.; 6 p.m. Mincha.

Shabbat Services: AA Reconstructionist Havurah. Participatory, lay-led services. For info, email info@aarecon.org or call 913-9705 or visit www.aarecon.org.

Shabbat Services: Chabad. Morning services at 9:45 a.m. Afternoon services 45 minutes before sundown.

Shabbat Services: Pardes Hannah. Generally meets the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of each month. Call 663-4039 for more information. 10 a.m. led by Rabbi Elliot Ginsburg.

Shabbat Services: TBE. Weekly Torah Study at 8:50 a.m. led by Rabbi Levy in the chapel followed at 9:30 a.m. by congregant led service. Service in the sanctuary at 10 a.m. on weeks when there is a bar or bat mitzvah. Call the office at 665-4744 or consult webiste at www.templebethemeth.org for service details.

Seudah Shlisheet Dvar Torah: AAOM. On Shabbat after Mincha every week at U-M Hillel. Torah topics and snacks are part of this weekly tradition. Discussions are led by Rabbi Rod Glogower and other local scholars.

Home Hospitality for Shabbat Meals: AAOM. Call 662-5805 in advance.

Home Hospitality and Meals: Chabad. Every Shabbat and *yom tov* (Jewish holiday). Call in advance, 995-3276.

"Mystical Insights to the Torah": Chabad. For women to learn more about the mystical dimensions of the Torah. Saturday, one hour before sundown. Call 995-3276.

"Laws of Shabbat—Jewish Ethics": Chabad. Study group examines the code of law for Shabbat and Jewish ethics. Saturday, 1/2 hour before sundown. Call 995-3276.

Phone numbers and addresses of organizations frequently listed in the calendar:

Ann Arbor Orthodox Minyan (AAOM)
1429 Hill Street 994-5822

Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Havurah
P.O. Box 7451, Ann Arbor 913-9705

Beth Israel Congregation (BIC)
2000 Washtenaw Ave. 665-9897

Chabad House
715 Hill Street 995-3276

EMU Hillel
965 Washtenaw Ave., Ypsilanti 482-0456

Jewish Community Center (JCC)
2935 Birch Hollow Drive 971-0990

Jewish Cultural Society (JCS)
2935 Birch Hollow Drive 975-9872

Jewish Family Services (JFS)
625 State Circle Drive 769-0209

Jewish Federation
2939 Birch Hollow Drive 677-0100

Pardes Hannah
2010 Washtenaw Ave. 663-4039

Temple Beth Emeth (TBE)
2309 Packard Road 665-4744

U-M Hillel
1429 Hill Street 769-0500

Shabbat Candlelighting

April 6	*6:46 p.m.*
April 13	*6:53 p.m.*
April 20	*7:01 p.m.*
April 27	*7:09 p.m.*

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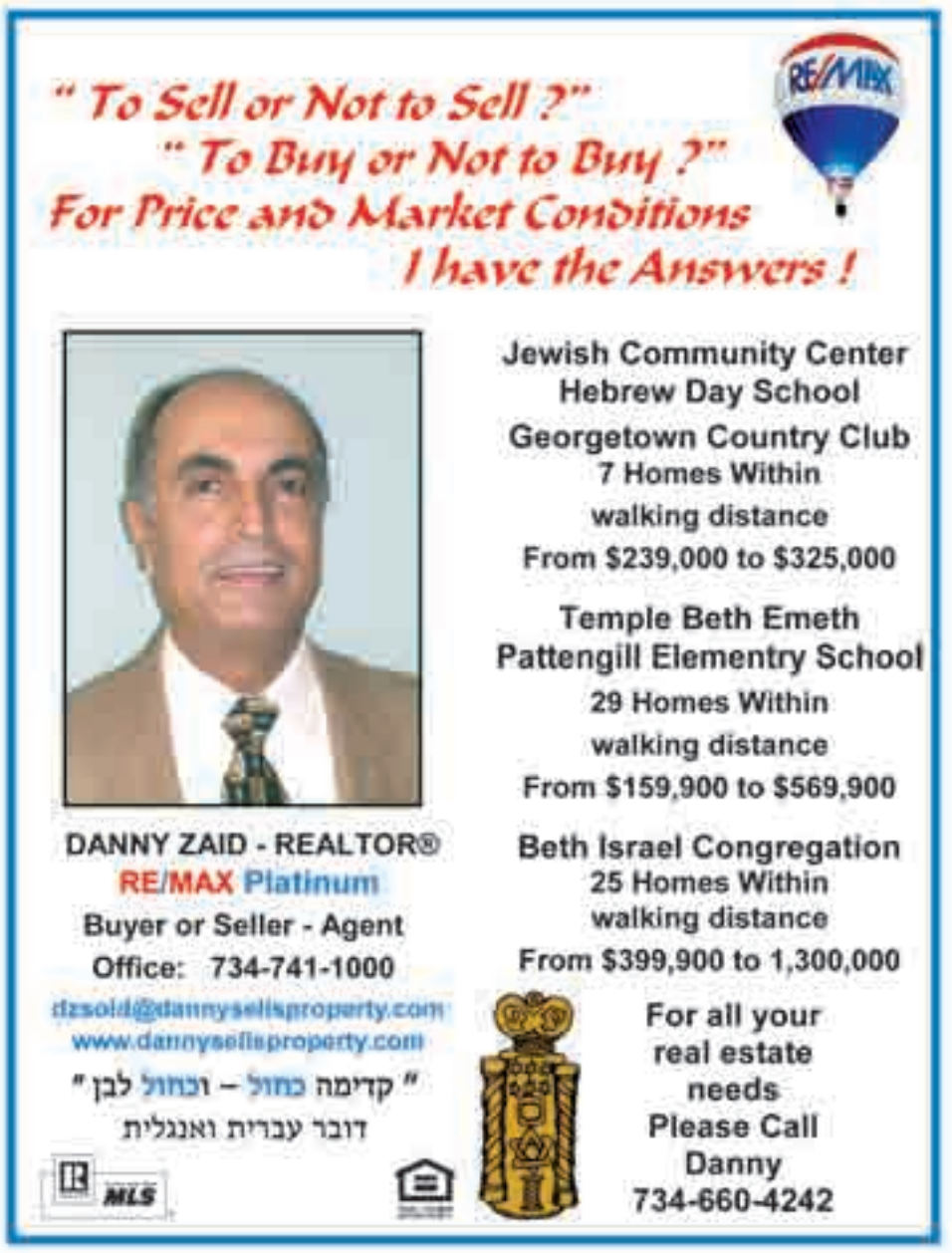

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Volunteers needed for Jewish Family Services. Call 971-0209.

The deadline for the May *Washtenaw Jewish News* is Monday April 9, at 3 p.m. Publication: Friday, April 27.

Baseball making its pitch in Israel

by Jacob Berkman

NEW YORK (JTA)—Modi'in may not be the Mudville of Casey fame, but its Miracles will enter baseball lore when their pitcher unleashes his first fastball against the Petach Tikva Pioneers on June 24. The central Israeli town is hosting the opener of the new Israel Baseball League, which will feature six teams playing a 45-game schedule this summer, officials announced Monday at a press conference in New York City.

IBL officials are hoping the league will quickly spur Israeli interest in American baseball—they aim to draw about 1,000 fans per game in the first year—while government officials hope it will help boost Israel's image abroad.

As the IBL's early fan base will likely be American expatriates yearning for a baseball fix, the league has enlisted three high-profile Jewish ex-Major Leaguers as managers: Ken Holtzman, the winningest Jewish pitcher in baseball history with 174 victories, including two no-hitters; New York Yankee Ron Blomberg, pro baseball's first designated hitter; and Art Shamsky, a member of the New York "Miracle" Mets that won the 1969 World Series.

Shamsky, an outfielder and first baseman, smacked four consecutive home runs while playing for the 1966 Cincinnati Reds.

"My mother's proudest moment for the past 41 years has been the day in 1966 when I pitched against Sandy Koufax," Holtzman said. "Now that I have the chance to manage in Israel, she's also very, very proud."

Dan Duquette, former general manager of the Boston Red Sox and Montreal Expos, will serve as the IBL's director of baseball operations. Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig is on the advisory board, as is his daughter, Milwaukee Brewers owner Wendy Selig-Prieb.

On the field, the league will provide opportunities for players like Leon Feingold to continue or revive their baseball dreams.

Feingold pitched for the Cleveland Indians in 1994 and 1995 before elbow surgery ended his career. Instead of attempting a comeback he went to law school. But at 33 he will put his law career on hold to resurrect his baseball dreams.

Feingold, who has been playing semi-pro ball in Westchester, N.Y., also has been ranked as high as 12th in the world by the International Federation of Competitive Eating. He once downed 152 hot dogs in 12 minutes. In Israel he will trade buns for fielding bunts—an opportunity he relishes.

"Getting a chance to play baseball again on the same level is getting a second chance at something that most people don't get a first chance at," Feingold said.

The IBL has signed players from eight countries including the Dominican Republic, Australia, Venezuela and the United States, Duquette said. About a dozen players will be Israeli, a dynamic the league hopes to change as interest in baseball spreads and the players improve in a game that now exists in the Jewish state only on the Little League level.

There is no official connection between the Israeli government and the IBL, according to the league's founder and managing director, Larry Baras. But infusing a deep-seated part of Americana could be a public relations boon for Israel.

Fittingly, the league's first commissioner is Daniel Kurtzer, a former U.S. ambassador to Israel.

The opportunity to show Israel not only as a country at war but as a country involved in sports—quintessentially American sports at that—could help Americans bond with Israel, the country's deputy consul in New York, Benjamin Krasna, told JTA.

"Sports is such an important part of America, if you can touch Americans through sports, they can see that Israel is not just a fortress," Krasna said, adding that exposing new audiences to Israel is an important part of this initiative.

League officials are adamant about getting Israel into the 2009 World Baseball Classic, an international baseball tournament comprised of professional and amateur all-stars.

Krasna said that names such as Blomberg, Shamsky and Holtzman could pique American interest, as could convincing a high-profile Jewish player, such as the New York Mets' Shawn Green, to play in Israel after his American career ends.

That might be a tough sell, considering that each team will have a salary cap of $45,000 for its entire 20- player roster.

The Jewish National Fund is helping connect potential funders to the IBL, which will have a budget of $2.5 million in its inaugural season. According to CEO Russell Robinson, the JNF may help the league find land for stadiums. Starting out, the six teams will share three fields.

The IBL will have no official relationship with Major League Baseball, but it is getting a hand from the world's most profitable baseball league: MLB.com will carry coverage of Israel's games. On April 15, after big- league teams have broken camp and started their seasons, Major League Baseball and the IBL will hold a tryout in California for players who did not make major or minor league rosters.

One thing Israel has to work on, Krasna says, is its baseball lexicon: There is no Hebrew word for bat, and pitch and throw are the same word. The IBL features a Hebrew-English glossary of baseball terms on its Web site.

At the press conference, Shamsky stumbled over a couple of Hebrew phrases he thought would come in handy with umpires during his first season.

" '*Ata eever*' means 'you're blind,' and '*patach eynayim*' means 'open your eyes,'" he said jokingly. ■

Vitals

Mazal Tov

Ari Axelrod on his bar mitzvah, April 21.
Jeffrey and Rachel Urist on the birth of their grandson, Joshua Urist, son of Joseph Urist and Lisa Cohen.
Victor and Sharon Lieberman on the birth of their grandson, Julius Saul Pitt.
Noam Raphael on his bar mitzvah, April 14.
Ellen and Sam Offen on the engagement of their daughter, Stephanie, to Andy Frankel.
Catherine Zudak and Robert Silbergleit on the birth of their daughter, Marina Hope Silbergleit, March 2.

Condolences

Paul Lichter and Allen Lichter on the death of their mother, Buena Lichter.
Jack Scheerer on the death of his sister, Libby Sturman.
Jill Cohen on the death of her mother, Charnee Schatel, on February 16.
Ken Kiesler on the death of his mother, Rose Kiesler, on February 26.
Edwin Pear on the death of his mother, Ceil Pear.
Sarajane Winkelman on the death of her husband, Jan.

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Correction

Our apologies to Abbie Lawrence-Jacobson and Laurie Wechter. We inadvertently switched their names and photos in the March *Washtenaw Jewish News*. Here is the correct photos and captions.

Laurie Wechter

Abigail Lawrence-Jacobson

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